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TALES OF FANCY;

BY

S. H. BURNEY.

AUTHOR OF

CLARENTINE, TRAITS OF NATURE, &c.

VOL. II.

COUNTRY NEIGHBOURS;

OR

THE SECRET.

"She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

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TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH,

HEREDITARY PRINCESS OF

HESSE HOMBOURG,

THESE VOLUMES,

SO HIGHLY HONOURED BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

GRACIOUS PERMISSION,

ARE INSCRIBED WITH PROFOUND RESPECT,

BY,

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

MOST OBEDIENT,

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

SARAH HARRIET BURNEY.

Lately published,

TALES OF FANCY, VOL. I.

CONTAINING

THE SHIPWRECK.

COUNTRY NEIGHBOURS.

Juliana Hay
1822

COUNTRY NEIGHBOURS.

HAZLEFORD,
Thursday, August 5th, 18—

BEING left alone with my father yesterday evening, and finding him less inclined to converse, than to pursue the calculation in which he was engaged, of the average variations of the thermometer during the three last summers, I was induced, from having nothing more amusing at hand, to turn over some of the pages of my long-neglected journal. I could not but smile at many of the recollections which it brought back to my mind; and I felt thankful, that, *upon the whole*, I found in it so little to revive melancholy impressions. My life has certainly not been illustrated by brilliant incidents; it has not abounded in variety; but at the

same time it has been exempted from calamity; and whatever vicissitudes have occurred in it, have been of a nature which (even when I was younger, and far more romantic than I am now,) I rarely could fancy myself entitled to dignify with the appellation of misfortunes. I suppose it might be from this very paucity of striking and solemn events, that I grew tired of writing the diurnal record which for several years I so perseveringly maintained. What were my exact feelings when I discontinued the practice, I have now forgotten: probably they were those of disappointment; for, when I began the journal, I was not more than sixteen; I was full of hope; I was by many classed amongst the belles of the county; and I can scarcely doubt that I first took up the pen with a firm expectation of having sundry important adventures to detail—adventures of which I was to be the exclusive and interesting heroine. Various passages in the early pages of these juvenile memoirs, denote such views most plainly. The preposterous vanity with which the commonest attentions from a young man are construed

into admiration; the silly disdain with which they are ridiculed; the impertinent pity affected for girls who seemed to be less noticed (but many of whom have since contracted the most advantageous alliances)—the airs, the self-complacency, the paltry attempts at wit—all, all, set before me such a picture of myself when young, that now, at forty, I shrug over it with contempt, and cannot but allow, that with a mind so constituted, I should but ill have deserved the splendid destiny which I had presumed to anticipate. I see nothing in my journal to love myself for, but my affection to my family, and my genuine diffidence of the favourable sentiments which I was said to have awakened in Col. Ashford. I never gave satisfactory and *comfortable* credit to the flattering suggestions which my mother held out to me on this subject. He is the only man I ever seriously wished to please, and, strange to say, he is the only man whose regard, notwithstanding my habitual conceit, I ever doubted my own power to secure. How fortunate for me was this solitary instance of modest distrust! Events have proved that he

merely entertained an unimpassioned and undesigning friendship for me; and that the calm deportment which I had the good sense always to aim at observing in his presence, blinded him so effectually to the extent of my partiality, that when his affairs called him from our neighbourhood, he departed with a conscience, as far as related to me, perfectly void of reproach. With him vanished all my romantic ideas; at least all those which had reference to myself. I have not indeed been wholly divested, now and then, of a slight tendency towards them in behalf of my sister Philippa; but as she is now approaching her five-and-twentieth birthday, I think they begin to subside even on *her* account; and in the cause of Martha, my youngest sister, I never could be romantic at all. The object for whom I am most likely to fall back into my old error, is a niece, my brother George's daughter, newly become an inmate with us at Hazleford. The arrival of this girl, the accidental recurrence of last night to the pages of my old journal, (many of which, in despight of their frivolity, amused me;) and the ample lei-

sure I possess for the employment—each and all of these inducements urge me to renew my former habit of noting down the passing events of the day.—I shall begin with the detail of what took place immediately preceding the appearance amongst us of our young and unknown kinswoman. A letter, which threw us all into great perturbation, was delivered to my father about a week ago, from my brother George, dated Florence. It stated, that despairing of being in circumstances to revisit England for some years, he had been induced to close with the proposal of a friend who was going to establish himself as an agriculturist in the Crimea, and was very urgent with him to join in the adventure. George, we have long had reason to know, always had a predilection for adventures; so he acceded to his friend's scheme. I hope it will not prove so mad a one, as some which he has formerly tried!—The letter then proceeds to announce, with very little circumlocution, that preparatory to becoming for an indefinite period an exile in so remote a part of Europe, he thinks it necessary to acknowledge, that he has a

daughter, now sixteen years of age, for whom it is his most anxious wish (her mother being dead) to procure the credit and security of an asylum at Hazleford! The cool manner in which this circumstance, though certainly not a very insignificant one, is mentioned, kindled a spark of indignation even in my easy-tempered father:—my mother exhausted herself (I should rather say exhausted her firmness) in vehement exclamations against the proposal. She often becomes facile in proportion to her first energy of opposition; and I believe, more or less, that may be the case with all who use very great strength of language where gentler expressions might better suit the subject. "Are we," she cried, "in the face of the whole county, to receive and give countenance to an illegitimate girl, born and bred we know not where, nor by whom? This is a stroke of easy assurance, which surpasses all that I could ever have conceived even George to have been capable of venturing!" Upon further inspection of the letter, however, we found that the poor girl was *not* illegitimate; that her mother was George's

wife, and a foreign lady of good family and education: but she was poor; and George, conscious of the imprudence of such a match, kept it concealed till the prospect of being obliged to migrate to such a distance, leaving his daughter friendless and unprotected, frightened him into disclosing it.

This view of the affair changed the aspect which it had at first borne. My father's placid temper resumed its characteristic habit of indulgence; and my mother, influenced by the dread of having long letters to write, and wearisome contentions to go through, yielded, to avoid trouble.

Three days afterwards, the poor girl—Blanch is her name—was safely deposited at our door. She had herself been made the bearer to England of the letter which was to introduce her, with directions from her father to stay one day at Dover after forwarding it, and then, with her maid, to pursue the road into Staffordshire. Fortunately this maid is an Englishwoman, and appears to be a person of sense, and one who is every way worthy of the trust which my brother reposed in her. She lived several years with

the mother of our young niece, who hired her at Geneva, on the death of the lady with whom she originally went abroad. Blanch manifests great affection for her, and, in return, the maid seems as devotedly attached to her charge as a foster mother could be. It is pleasant to see them together; and, were we rich enough, we should not hesitate in determining to keep so good a creature in the family. At all events she is to stay with us a week or ten days, to give Blanch time to wean herself gradually from her, and to become better acquainted with the new faces around her.

Philippa has been spending six weeks in London, with our neighbour Mrs. Talbot, who treats herself annually with such an excursion for about the same period; hires a good ready-furnished house in some fashionable part of the town, and enters with spirit into all the gaiety which her fortune, her connexions, and perfect independence enable her to enjoy. We expect them back this evening: that is, my father, Martha, and I

do; relying upon the assurances contained in Philippa's last letter: but my mother laughs at our credulity, and says, that should another ball, opera, or masquerade interfere with their plans, neither Mrs. Talbot nor my sister are the sort of persons upon whose punctuality to their country friends she would place any dependence. We shall see!—Meanwhile, I amuse myself with anticipating the surprise—perhaps consternation, into which Philippa will be thrown on first learning the recent addition made to our family. I have not written to her since the arrival of Blanch, because I very well knew that a *short* account of the affair would give her no satisfaction; and a long one I did not think it worth while to send, as we were so soon to meet.

True to their word, the travellers arrived last night, and my mother, who had risked a half-crown wager with me that they would not keep to their appointment, lost her money, and what she much more regretted,

her triumph at her own superior talents of prediction. Mrs. Talbot did not alight, having two miles further to go, and the evening being far advanced; Philippa therefore had full opportunity to engage immediately in family conversation.

She was surprised and disappointed, on entering the sitting-room, not to find my mother. We told her (omitting the injurious wager), that she was gone to see a poor sick woman in the village, and would be back in less than half an hour.—She then began to remonstrate with me upon the subject of my silence to her two last letters. I explained to her, that having a long story to tell, and the prospect of seeing her so soon, I had been willing to spare myself the unnecessary trouble of writing what in a few days might as well be related by word of mouth.—"A long story!" repeated Philippa, "and has Hazleford furnished materials for such a treat?—Pray let me hear it.—I hope, my dear Anne, it is of a pleasant complexion?" Martha simpered; my father hummed an old march, and began walking up and down the room; and I (a little embarrassed, but

ashamed of myself for feeling so,) entered as steadily as I could upon the history of George and his poor girl. The exclamations and interruptions of Philippa were innumerable. At first, like the rest of us, she was indignant at George's encroaching spirit; then she shewed a little interest about his motherless child; and, lastly, she was all curiosity to see this new kinswoman, and eagerly enquired where she was.

"My mother," answered I, "has taken her by way, as she said, of *a live walking-stick*, down into the village with her."

"I wish, with all my heart, the awkwardness of a first meeting was over! what is she like? how does she behave? what language does she speak?"

"She is like," said my kind father, "every thing that is most engaging; I am sure she will please you, Philippa."

"Her behaviour," added I, is at present very shy, but otherwise unexceptionable."

"And," subjoined Martha, thus replying in due order to Phillipa's three questions, "we have yet only heard her speak English; but I suppose she also knows French

and Italian, for she has lived both at Lausanne and in Italy."

"Well, now that every possible enquiry about her has been asked and answered," resumed Philippa, "tell me a little what has been going forward in this illustrious neighbourhood. Is any body married, or dead, or run away, or grown rich, or suddenly ruined?"

"No; I believe there is nothing of so momentous a nature to communicate; but we have agreeable news to give you respecting Eastvale—beautiful Eastvale."

"Indeed? of what description?"

"Of a description which the whole population of this district, rich and poor, will rejoice at. Sir Reginald Tourberville has sent orders to have every thing got ready for his coming down to spend some months here."

"And why, my dear Anne, are we to be all so much enchanted at this intelligence? What do we know about the old Baronet? I was in hopes that he had either sold or let the place."

"Sell Eastvale!" cried my father, horror-

struck at the idea of such a profanation—"A Chief of the honourable and ancient house of Tourberville sell the brightest gem in its possession—the stately mansion and magnificent domains of Eastvale!—Philippa, I am surprised to hear you express such a wish!"

"I only wish, Sir, that it should be inhabited by somebody more popular, and more gay and accessible than its present owner. Why do people pretend to rejoice in his coming to reside here? What foretaste has he given of a disposition to become either a blessing to the low or a pleasure to the high?"

"He bears an excellent character as a landlord," said my father.

"And I have heard," added I, "that at stated intervals he is both munificent to the poor, and hospitable to the rich."

"How I hate a man," cried Philippa, "whose alms and feasts are bestowed at *stated intervals*!—Where is the spontaneous glow that should give heart to the one, and grace to the other? Sir Reginald Tourberville has absented himself from the prin-

cipal seat of his ancestors till his memory is almost lost amongst us. For myself, I can only recollect having often heard it said, that he was a libertine in his youth, and is a sort of misanthrope in his old age; and I must own, that I look forward to his long-deferred return with no sort of satisfaction."

"You think and speak of him, my dear Philippa with too much asperity," said my father; "he is not a man, I allow, who will give balls or private theatricals at East Vale; but he will probably do a great deal of good; whether," added he, smiling, "from *spontaneous* or systematic benevolence, no matter; and he is one who should be treated with some lenity in consideration of the heavy family misfortunes he has experienced."

Neither Philippa nor I knew very distinctly what the misfortunes were to which my father alluded; and we begged him to explain himself more clearly. He then told us that Sir Reginald had married early in life, and had had two sons, both of whom grew up to manhood, and received every advantage of education to which their distinguished birth entitled them. They turned out,

however, though in different ways, equally ill. The eldest, having irreconcilably disobliged his father, banished himself from England, resided some years in obscurity abroad; and died as he had lived, an outcast from his family and country, at the early age of five and twenty. The second son is probably still in existence; but he also is an exile, having forsaken a wife to whom he had always appeared much attached, and an only daughter, to elope with a married woman whose husband was his most intimate friend. "This abominable transaction," continued my father, "occurred about ten years since; and Sir Reginald, I am told, has not yet by any means recovered the shock which it occasioned him. Where the son is, I have never heard; his wife, poor thing! is dead, and the general belief seems to be, that her premature decease was brought on by sorrow at the misconduct of her husband.—The old Baronet is now left without any other lineal descendant than the daughter of this worthless son. He has been kind to her, it is said, for the sake of her mother:—that is, he has largely contributed towards the ex-

penses of her education; but he has never suffered her to live with him, and sees her as seldom as possible. She resides with some of her maternal relations, and it appears very doubtful whether she will ever inherit more than a merely decent competency out of the splendid possessions of which he is the forlorn and unenviable owner. The individual who is reputed to hold the highest rank in his good graces, is his eldest nephew Mr. Tremayne, the son by her first marriage, of his only sister the present Viscountess Earlsford. She is, as you all know, the owner of Bovil Court, about two miles from hence; and is again a widow, with one son, still a minor, to whom the Earlsford titles descend, and who is committed to the charge of Sir Reginald."

Philippa seemed a little reconciled to the idea of the impending re-occupation of East Vale by its hereditary possessor, when she heard that there were nephews to enliven the scene, and a Viscountess to give it dignity. I suspect that she bestowed not half so much thought upon the relation which we had just heard of the poor old man's domestic calami-

ties, as upon the concluding and brighter part of the detail. Philippa loves the sound of a title, and next to a title, she loves, I think, to hear of a fine house, and (to use the cant of the day) *a well appointed* establishment. These may be silly fancies, but I can perfectly remember the time, when I participated in a veneration for the same vanities; and I believe after all, the foible is common to most young persons, who pique themselves upon admiring refinement and elegance, as opposed to what they are too apt to denominate coarseness and vulgarity.

The return of my mother with her young companion, terminated our conference respecting East Vale and its master. Philippa was welcomed with the warmest affection, and gave every indication of partaking sincerely in the pleasure which her arrival occasioned. She congratulated my mother, who, when she left home was just recovering from a tedious indisposition, on the improvement in her looks, repeatedly exclaiming—"How glad—how *very* glad I am, dearest madam, to find you so completely yourself again! I never saw you in higher beauty!"

This was so fair an opening for a little sarcasm—(that weapon which, indulgent as she is, my mother best loves to wield), that she found the temptation irresistible:

"My dear Philippa," cried she, laughing, "speak out at once! Under this excess of flattery there certainly must lurk some hidden meaning. What new favour are you aiming to cajole from me? Do you want to set out again for London to-morrow?"

"Dear Madam how can you suspect it?"

"Then what a waste of sentimental civility have you made! Can you be ignorant, child, of the uses to which you might apply so ready a knack of paying personal compliments to a waning beauty (for a beauty I certainly *was* in my day), who still happens to hold a little authority in her hands? Such convenient powers of adulation should be better husbanded. Half the praise of my good looks which you have now squandered with so much improvidence, might, for aught you know, have bribed from me a new plume of feathers, a lap-dog, or a French watch. Ask Martha what she would give for such happy coaxing talents!" Martha,

always shrinking from my mother's side when in danger of being made the subject of a jest, drew back at these words, leaving an opening for the unobtrusive young stranger to appear.

Never did I see surprise more forcibly portrayed than it was at that moment in the countenance of Philippa. She approached her, took her hand, and speaking to her in an accent of kindness, surveyed her with fixed and earnest attention. She had been prepared to behold a tall girl, with a pleasing exterior: but nothing that we had said had prepared her for beauty so exquisite—for a form so graceful, in aid of features so symmetrical, that they seem cast in the mould of an antique bust, and might serve as a model to a statuary or a painter, for the most perfect representation of a Psyche or a Flora. Philippa has since told me, that no face which till then she had seen, except on canvas or in marble, ever appeared to her half so faultless; and whilst involuntarily gazing at her, with a prolonged scrutiny that grew almost oppressive to its object, she mentally said: "This creature realizes all that the

poets of antiquity have feigned of their Nymphs and Goddesses;—had she been born in heathen Greece or Rome, she would have been deified for her beauty, and temples would have been erected to her honour!"

"Well, Philippa," at length said my Mother, after watching, much amused, the close observation with which she had contemplated our new inmate—"Well—how do you like your brother's heiress? Does she, in your opinion, hold forth the slightest prospect of being tolerated in society without a mask?"

Philippa smiled, but remained silent: perhaps my mother thought, that had she answered with sincerity, she might have owned, that the perpetual concealment of *such* a face would not have been to her a matter of deep regret. However that might be, she thought proper to repress such a confession; and, indeed, to my penetrating Mother, it would have been completely superfluous. In every line of Philippa's countenance she read terror of future rivalry; and far from being incredulous of its justice, I clearly perceived, that she could not but internally allow, that it

would have been difficult to select an object more qualified to eclipse her daughter's attractions, than the unconscious individual then standing before them.

After a short pause, "Philippa," resumed my Mother, "there is no evil without its counterpoise. This little person, whatever impression her exterior may create, will certainly amaze no one by the profundity of her intellectual acquirements. She is as untrained as a wild colt, as heedless as if born without ears or eyes;—has not a shadow of meaning in any thing she does, and only as a matter of courtesy, is entitled to be called a rational being. Yet, when she is silent, you might be so far deceived as to imagine that she sometimes thought."

"And I hope," said the good-humoured object of these strictures, looking at her grandmother with a smile which shewed that she had already obtained considerable insight into her characteristic love of irony—"I hope, now and then, to prove that I can think when I am *not* silent."

"Wait, my dear, till your aunts furnish

you with a precedent. Innovations in family usages ought never to be introduced by its junior members. It is not the fashion of this house to think."

"Pardon me, grandmamma—I see it *is!*"

"Prove it, child."

"Why, is it not evidently the fashion of my aunts to think, that when you say things which sound a little severe, you are only seeking to divert yourself, and not intending to mortify them seriously?"

"Very well—very well explained!" cried my father, looking kindly at the young speaker.

"Aye;—but should she," resumed my mother, laughing, "succeed in persuading them to view the matter in this harmless light, she will ruin one of the richest sources of amusement I have left!—What! are all my witticisms to be levelled against them in vain? All considered as innoxious flashes, scarcely deserving attention, and never meant to put their tempers in a ferment!—Intolerable!—However, I still flatter myself, that there is no very imminent danger of their *all*

becoming converts to her mischievous mode of interpreting my little freedoms of speech! What say you, Martha?"

Martha, without moving a muscle, drily answered, "I don't know what you mean, Ma'am;" and then, with the same gravity, went on stringing a row of amber beads.

Philippa now remarked, that there was something in the accent of our young relation that sounded foreign. "That," said I, "will soon wear off; we told you, you know, that her mother was not an Englishwoman."

"What countrywoman was she?"

"An Italian," answered Blanch; "she was born, I believe, at Rome; but she had resided in many different parts of the world, and spoke several languages nearly as well as her own."

"And is that also the case with you?"

"Oh, no; I wish it were."

After some further catechising of this kind, not very pleasant I suspect to our new guest, my mother, with one of her most provoking looks, addressing Philippa, said: "Pray, my dear, at what degree of temperature do you

mean to let the thermometer of your civility stand, now that you are once more condemned to associate with a circle of country bumkins?—Is it to be high or low? hot? cold? or merely moderate?"

Philippa laughingly replied: "It will probably vary, as all thermometers do, according to time and place, or the objects with which it may come in contact."

"And what, are we to presume, will be the effect produced by its coming into contact with an apothecary's wife?"

"That, my dear madam, depends quite as much upon circumstances as the first part of your enquiry."

"Upon what circumstances?"

"Upon the sort of woman this apothecary's wife may be. If she should happen, for instance," added Philippa, disdainfully smiling, "to resemble our sensible and accomplished neighbour, Mrs. Samuel Crosby, I think you will have no difficulty in guessing at what degree my thermometer will stand."

With a *sang-froid* that was indescribably ludicrous, my mother, taking a pinch of

snuff, said: "Mrs Samuel Crosby is the very woman in question."

We all stared: my father, who was in the act of snuffing one of the candles, put it out; Martha's string of odious amber beads slipped from between her fingers, and rolled about the floor; a flush of pride tinged the cheeks of Philippa, who, however, thought it wisest to bite her lips, and say nothing: whilst, as to myself, the notion so strongly possessed me that my mother was only in jest, that I ventured, after a moment's silence, to say, "You have puzzled us all completely, dear madam; and unless you help us out, I do not believe that we shall ever discover the meaning of your riddle."

"You are a sad set of dull people," resumed my mother. "Why, its meaning is, that in the course of my pastoral stroll this evening, I met Philippa's favourite, Dame Crosby of the Green, who greeted me with much kindness, asked me who this Miss Maypole was," looking at Blanch, "who stood by my side;—lamented extremely that she saw so little of me, and my nice, agree-

able daughters;—and ended by preferring to them, through me, an humble request to be honoured with their company to a little dance at her house next week."

I cannot, even yet, recal to mind, without laughing, the expression visible in every countenance upon hearing the latter part of my mother's information. Philippa, much too angry to trust herself to speak, snatched up a little basket, which on her arrival she had placed with other small packages upon the table, and began untying it by way of having something to do; Martha looked half inclined to smirk at the word *dance*, and half disposed to sneer at the idea of *her* who was to give it. I secretly formed the resolution of having nothing to do with such an engagement; and my father, less passive than usual, said, "My dear, I do not see why we or our daughters should visit Mrs Crosby. I believe that none but the tradespeople at Ashbourne ever associate with her."

"Then, unless any of the tradespeople at Ashbourne can be persuaded to marry one of them, Dame Crosby cannot be indulged with the felicity of their company?"

"Should you like, madam," said Philippa, bending over her employment, and affecting a tone of jocularity which but ill disguised the unsubdued irritation of her feelings— "Should you like a hosier or a hatter for a son-in-law?"

"Prodigiously, my dear; I should not even object to a tallow-chandler, who would relieve me from the terror of never having any son-in-law at all!"

"This is happy news for *you*, Martha!" resumed Philippa significantly.

Poor Martha, who understood this, as it was meant, to be an allusion to a silly flirtation which she had been detected in carrying on last summer with a young linen-draper at Ashbourne, and which had involved her in great disgrace with us all, darted towards Philippa a glance compounded of shame and passion, suddenly rose from her seat, and crying violently, rushed out of the room.

Philippa shrugged her shoulders; my father looked concerned, and gently said, "Fie, fie, my dear!—you should not have made that speech!" My mother coolly observed, "We have the happiness, Sir Geoffry, of possess-

ing two delightfully amiable daughters!"—And then addressing Blanch, who was trying to entice my father's drowsy old spaniel to play with her, "Do let that fat, lazy dog alone, child," cried she; "he is arrived at an age when peace and quiet are preferable even to coaxing and flattery. Get the volume of Metastasio which you were reading last night, and go on with the beautiful drama you left unfinished."

Blanch did as she was required. Her correctness in pronouncing Italian, a language of which my mother is peculiarly fond, but which neither Philippa nor I can read or speak with fluency—the intimate acquaintance with her author, which enabled her to give such justness of expression to his sentiments—the youthful, yet mellow tones of her voice, gifted with the happiest powers of modulation—and, above all, the beauty of Metastasio's refined and tender poetry, soothed the whole party, and seemed to confirm the general prepossession in her favour. When, at eleven o'clock, our sober family circle broke up, Blanch received a kiss and a blessing from her grandmother; my father

followed the example; and Philippa, kindly shaking hands with her, thanked her for the pleasure which she had afforded us, and smiled upon her with real cordiality. I hope now that every thing will go on smoothly.

Last night our pleasant neighbour, Mr. Westcroft, paid us a visit of congratulation on the return of Philippa. My mother scolded him for having so seldom, of late, been at Hazleford. His excuse was, that his time had been almost entirely taken up in superintending the repairs necessary to be made at Bovil Court previous to its being occupied by his old friend Lady Earlsford, "who," he added, "after an absence on the continent of several years, is at length coming to inhabit that long-neglected, though handsome structure. When her youngest son," he continued, "the present Viscount, comes of age, she will, of course, give it up to him: but, meanwhile, the vicinity of her brother, Sir Reginald Tourberville, who is guardian to Lord Earlsford, is a strong inducement to her

to make Bovil-Court her temporary place of residence. Being on the spot, I offered, when I heard her intention, to assist a little in directing what was most essential to be done." "But how came Bovil-Court in such grievous condition?" enquired my mother—"It has never been uninhabited a whole year during any part of the time spent abroad by its late possessor. Every autumn, some one or other of the family has been passing two or three months there;—at least, so village gossip has reported." "It is true," replied Mr. Westcroft, "that whilst his parents were absent, the young Viscount, then Mr Earlsford, was annually sent with a tutor to make some abode at the seat of his ancestors: but he had no authority to command reparations, and provided his own accommodations were tolerable, had probably no thought about the matter. However that may be, I do assure you, that the place was most wretchedly dilapidated; and with all my bustling and hurrying amongst the workmen, I much question, even yet, whether it will be in a fit state for Lady Earlsford's reception when she arrives."

"I dare say," cried my mother, laughing, "you *have* been in a most noble bustle!—Methinks I see you, surrounded by carpenters, masons, joiners, and upholsterers, the plague of all their lives!—ordering, counter-ordering, storming, threatening"——

"And bribing!" interrupted he; "for nothing, I soon found, was to be done, without having recourse to that most cogent of all arguments."

"I can scarcely satisfy myself whether the bribe was given to urge them to despatch, or to reconcile them to your unconscionable impatience."

"A little, perhaps, for both purposes," said Mr. Westcroft, good-humouredly.

Philippa now enquired how soon the arrival of Lady Earlsford was to be expected.

"She will be down, I think, in the course of the present week."

"And we, I suppose," said my mother, "are to visit her. Now, if she were not your *friend*, Mr. Westcroft, I would ask you what sort of woman we shall find her: but friends deal in hyperbole on these occasions;—at least, I always give them credit for doing so.

Either from real partiality, or from a sense of what is suitable to the character they profess, their sketches are invariably drawn with too favourable a pencil. What friends say of friends is just as little to be trusted, as what epitaphs say of the dead. There is an established form for this sort of things: in one case, *amiable, accomplished,* and *clever* are the appointed attributes; in the other, the changes are rung upon *virtue, meekness,* and *charity,* eked out to decorous monumental length, by trite attestations of *conjugal fidelity,* and *parental tenderness.*"

"Well then, I will spare myself the task of describing Lady Earlsford," said Mr. Westcroft; "you will soon see her; and such is your quickness of penetration, my dear madam, that in five minutes you will understand her better than I could enable you to do in five hours."

"Her mind, then, is not of a very complicated nature?"

"No, it is not.—But where were you, Lady Stavordale, when, soon after her second marriage, she spent two or three summers at Bovil-Court?"

"At Scarborough, probably. We used, after the sale of Meadthorpe," and she sighed, as she always does, when speaking of Meadthorpe,—"we used to take the children there, or to some of the bathing places on the Welsh coast every season:—but that was in our locomotive days; we have now struck root, and never *do* stir, nor ever *are* to stir—hey, Sir Geoffry?—from this intellectual, interesting, and improving neighbourhood!"

This was hardly a fair sarcasm to level against my dear father. We all know to what his present rigid system of economy is to be attributed. The debts incurred by George in England, and the heavy drains upon my father's purse which so long succeeded his departure for the Continent, left us no alternative: we must either retrench, or incur disgrace and ruin. But my Mother has never forgiven the sale of Meadthorpe, and our removal to this, comparatively paltry residence. She hates Hazleford, and makes no scruple of avowing it; for, with all her bright endowments, she is as ignorant of the value of money as a child: and either never

could, or never *would* understand, why an income, reduced, from various causes, to nearly half its original amount, cannot be made to go as far, as an income which, even at its best, never went a tenth part so far as she projected. This unfortunate inaptitude to calculate correctly, leads her to say a thousand petulant things, when the family expenditure is in question, which better financial abilities, and more talent for domestic legislation, would withhold her from uttering. I do the best in my power, as far as regards the superintendance of the household, to supply her deficiencies: but what, alas! *can* I do, to restrain the injustice of those reproaches, with which she so often pains my dear father for his honourable sacrifices?

I was very glad, considering the turn which the conversation had taken, that it was put an end to by the entrance of two good-humoured girls, the daughters of our curate, Mr. Paulet, who had been invited by my mother to come and practise English country dances with our uninitiated Blanch. Quadrilles and waltzes she understands to perfection: but our now nearly exploded

national dance, she is almost totally unacquainted with; and my mother, being determined to take her to Mrs. Crosby's on Saturday, is desirous to qualify her for partaking in the style of amusement which it is likely she will there meet with. She was not in the drawing room when the Paulets arrived, but soon made her appearance; and I was delighted to observe how much she seemed to strike Mr. Westcroft, who is, as you may remember, a great *connoisseur* in beauty. The moment she entered, he asked me a thousand questions about her; extolled her to the skies; watched her countenance and movements with unwearied interest; and, finally, to our great amusement, staid, not only to see, but to take an active part in what was going forward. I was principal musician; my mother, mistress of the ceremonies; Martha the most indefatigable of dancers; Philippa occasionally relieving me at the piano-forte; my father a pleased spectator; and the Paulets, Mr. Westcroft—in short, the whole room, zealous to give Blanch all the insight into the mysteries of English

steps, and English figures, which her inexperience required. She soon caught the time, and understood enough of *change sides and back again, swing corners, lead down the middle, right hand and left,* to give hopes that at Mrs. Crosby's she will come off triumphantly. My mother says, that between this and Saturday, there must be one more evening's practice; and Mr. Westcroft really looked as if he felt half inclined to invite himself again to attend it. Before our *ball* finally terminated, he intreated the gratification of seeing Blanch and Philippa waltz. They complied, and both acquitted themselves admirably; not indeed without a little degree of affectation on the part of Philippa: but that she cannot now entirely help; habit, in some instances, has rendered affectation natural to her; aud if it *can* ever sit well upon any body, it is upon her. She had not been much pleased by the extraordinary observation which Blanch had attracted during the evening from Mr. Westcroft: but the praise which he bestowed upon the waltz, including *both* the dancers, cleared up

her countenance; and I prognosticate that waltzing, from this time forward, will stand higher in her favour than any other style of dancing.

Our fine neighbours, we hear, are arrived at their respective habitations, East Vale, and Bovil Court. The talk about them in the vicinity is really sickening; and though we ourselves love great people, we are, for once, completely weary of listening to the uninteresting details circulated every where concerning these two families. For my own part, I had now a thousand times rather talk and think of Mrs. Samuel Crosby's approaching dance.

Blanch has persuaded me to resolve upon going. She is quick-sighted, and has clearly discovered that with Philippa she is no very great favourite: in me, on the contrary, she says, that she is sure she has found an indulgent friend; she professes to like being with me; she recurs to me in all her little difficulties, for assistance or advice: we read,

work, walk, and above all, talk together; and I find in her a companion at once arch, simple, sensible, and frank. My mother she admires, but fears a little; my father she affectionately loves; Martha she never speaks of at all; and Philippa she talks of with a comic expression of countenance which seems to imply. "*That* is forbidden ground —I must take no liberties in that quarter!"— While Philippa affects to treat her as a child; and, I suppose, finds some consolation in endeavouring to persuade herself that she will be considered as such by every body else. In proof of this, yesterday, when Mrs. Talbot was sitting with us, something being said (as is the case indeed, whenever a visitor enters), about these tiresome new families; Martha broke through her accustomed inanimate silence, and ventured to ask Mrs. Talbot, whether she thought that any balls would be given at Bovil Court or East Vale? "Yes, I dare say there will," replied she; "so practice all your most graceful steps, and all your newest quadrille figures;—and if neither the Earlsfords nor Sir Reginald do the handsome thing, why, I will shame

them, and do it myself!" Martha looked almost lively on hearing tidings so auspicious; whilst Mrs. Talbot, turning to Blanch, said, "Are *you* fond of dancing?"—"She can hardly tell, poor child," cried Philippa, answering for her.—

"Why not?" enquired my mother.

"We seldom," resumed Philippa, "know whether we are fond of any thing we have learnt, till the time comes when we are called upon to put that learning into action.—Now Blanch, at her age, neither *can* have had, nor must expect that at present, she *will* have the least chance, amongst real dancers, of ascertaining this important point,—of course, I do not call the strange hop at Mrs. Crosby's, to which my mother chuses to take her, a ball!"

"Upon my word," said my mother, "you are settling this matter in a very summary mode! But, my dear Philippa, let us wait till we are all asked to one of those real balls before we finally resolve upon the exclusion of Blanch for the guilt of being *too young*.—Depend upon it, I will introduce her int no house where I do not feel perfectly con-

vinced that she will be a welcome guest."

Philippa, perceiving that her very scrupulous notions of etiquette, were not likely to be well received; and, perhaps a little afraid of appearing ill-natured, pursued the subject no further; and, Mrs. Talbot, I hope, went away fully persuaded, that in all she had said, her views were perfectly disinterested. Oh, that Marplot, Mr. Westcroft!—We were going on very well, till he chose to break forth into such lavish praise of our poor Blanch!—I wish people would admire her, and keep their own counsel!

Mrs. Crosby's hop, as Philippa, not very undeservedly, chose to call it, is over; a circumstance I really regret, on account of the hearty laugh it afforded me.

My mother, after the first information which she had given us of the invitation, said nothing more to Philippa or me upon the subject, till we rose from the table yesterday (the day appointed for the party to

take place), when she slightly enquired what was our final determination respecting the engagement? Philippa unhesitatingly answered: "Mrs. Crosby is my utter aversion! She is the most vulgar woman I ever saw, and I would not go to her house for the world!"

"Very well," said my mother, calmly.—Then, looking at me, "What is your intention, Anne?"

"I mean to go Madam."

"Still better;—and what, '*though last, not least*,' says my fair daughter Martha?"

Martha acknowledged that she thought *any* dance better than none, and professed herself willing to try what sort of thing it would be.

The point thus settled, we separated, and (Mrs. Crosby having declared that the meeting would be an early one) retired to dress. When duly equipped, we assembled in the drawing-room to take leave of my father and Philippa, and to hear their opinion of our *toilette*. Philippa criticised the arrangement of Blanch's hair; laughed at Martha's incorrigible *poke*; scolded me for having made

myself look ten years older than there was any occasion; and then asked, at what hour we should return?

My mother said that was uncertain; and quietly added, as she approached the door, "We must go now, for it would be pity that Martha should lose the chance of opening the ball with Lord Earlsford."—"Lord Earlsford," echoed Philippa; "is *he* to be at Mrs. Crosby's?" "She told me so, I think, in Mrs. Franklin's shop this morning; and, indeed, I understood from the first, that it was the hope of his coming that induced her to give the party."

"But what in the world can be *his* inducement to go to it? Where can he have known her?"

"Mrs. Crosby, my dear, though not good enough for us, has been looked upon, time immemorial, as a personage to whom it is no disgrace to speak at Bovil Court, where they even condescend to acknowledge considerable obligation to her for some service which she once had it in her power to render to the present Viscount."

Philippa looked most ridiculously discon-

certed, and I saw that she sorely repented having declined the engagement. "Come," said I, "shake off your laziness, and when my father joins us, an hour or two hence, resolve upon accompanying him."

The suggestion, it was plain, coincided perfectly with her wishes: but thinking it right to hesitate till further pressed; or at least till my mother (who maliciously chose to observe a complete neutrality) said something in its favour; Martha grew impatient of the delay, and fretfully exclaimed, "I declare, Philippa, you are very tiresome! why don't you make up your mind at once, and let us go?" The remonstrance was most happily timed, and gave the fair waverer the best excuse which she seemed likely to obtain for coming to an explicit declaration. She hastily intreated that she might no longer detain us, and promised to follow us as soon as she could get ready. My mother coughed away a laugh, nodded to her with an air of much meaning, and led the way to the carriage.

During our short drive, I enquired the

nature of the obligation which Mrs. Crosby was said to have conferred upon the family at Bovil-Court.

My mother told me, that the story which she had heard from Mrs. Paulet, our curate's wife, was briefly this.

Some years ago, young Earlsford, the present Viscount, then a child, was accidentally left a few weeks at the Court under the care of servants. During this period, he caught the scarlet fever, and was so ill, that Mr. Crosby, by whom he was attended, thought him in very serious danger. The parents were, of course, written to; but in the interval previous to their arrival, Mrs. Crosby established herself as head nurse by the bedside of the suffering boy, and never quitted him day nor night (even after Lady Earlsford reached Bovil-Court), till Mr. Crosby declared him convalescent. For this instance of active and judicious attention, she has since been constantly valued and distinguished by the grateful family with the most cordial regard. The present dance is given in commemoration of young Earls-

ford's recovery; an event which, when he is in Staffordshire, is annually celebrated under her roof.

This anecdote gave Mrs. Crosby, to use one of her own expressions, such "a lift" in my good opinion, that when we reached her house, and entered her drawing-room, I was in one of those tolerant moods which inclines us to overlook all failures, and to give credit for all well-meant attempts. The party which we found assembled in her long, narrow, wainscoted drawing-room, was so *very* juvenile, that we were all struck with surprize at having been included in the invitation. Martha's countenance assumed, even before she was seated, the most inveterate expression of sullen discontent; an expression which, superadded to features at all times far from handsome, gave her so unattractive an appearance, that my mother, I am sure, felt, more than once, ashamed that she had brought her.

Eight or ten little girls, the eldest not more than thirteen, and nearly as many little boys, sat ranged in formal order, face to face, upon benches placed on each side the room, close

against the wall. Mrs. Crosby, who from the window had seen us approach, began, even before we alighted, all the preparatory bustle of an old-fashioned tea-maker (who puts in sugar and cream for a whole party), at a large round table, covered with muffins and plum-cake. She desisted, however, from her employment when we entered, and received us with a most smiling aspect, a succession of short, quick curtes'ies, and a cordial "servant, servant, ladies," repeated at every dip. Then, leading us towards our appointed seats, she beckoned to a tall, thin stripling, who stood at some distance conversing with her husband and another gentleman, and said, as she presented him to my mother, "This my Lady, is young Lord Earlsford; and this, added she, speaking to the bashful Peer, "this, my dear, is my good neighbour, Lady Stavordale; and that," looking at me, "is her eldest daughter; and the young lady standing beside her," she continued, involuntarily singling out Blanch before Martha, "is her pretty grand-daughter, who, I am sure, will make the nicest partner for you in the world. Oh, and this,"

she cried, recollecting herself, "is Miss Martha Stavordale, another of my Lady's daughters.—There, now you are all properly introduced; so please to take your seats, ladies."

We were about to comply, when suddenly she bethought herself of young Earlsford's tutor, Mr. Lloyd.—"My mercy! I forgot poor dear Mr. Lloyd! and I am sure I did not mean it in the least: only my head, just now, is quite bewildered, and is none of the clearest, I am afraid, at the best of times. My Lady," she went on, "this is Mr. Lloyd, my Lord's tutor, and the worthy curate (I wish with all my heart I could say rector) of Storriton; however, the time for preferment may not be far distant; for I am told," lowering her voice, "that poor old Dr. Dulverton is in a sad way; very infirm, and some think, getting quite dropsical. But take no notice, for his two little grandsons are sitting just behind us."

She was then going back to her tea-table, and I was afraid—for her manners and appearance, I am ashamed of myself for it, amused me inexpressibly—I was afraid I

should hear no more; but, in an instant, turning round, she again addressed my mother; saying, "But, my Lady, where is your other daughter? surely she does not mean to disappoint me of her company! it is *so* good of you to come, that I shall be vexed to my heart if any of your young folks stay away."

My mother explained to her, that Philippa and my father both intended themselves the pleasure of waiting upon her in the course of the evening.

"Well, well, she is a good girl, then. I begun to quake; did not you, Crosby? But I suppose," smirking, "Miss Philly" (oh, how Philippa would have hated her had she heard the odious abbreviation!) "takes longer to dizen than mamma and her sisters."

This matter being sufficiently discussed, she prevailed upon herself to trot back, in reality, to her round oak-wood table, and whilst arranging cups and saucers, whilst loudly calling for the tea urn, and alternately addressing to the row of boys, or the row of girls, some enlivening remark, she escaped the mortification of perceiving, that

the thread-paper Lord, the hero of the fête, whom she had placed in a chair next to Blanch, his destined partner, spoke not one word to her; but sheepish, and disconcerted, maintained his post with the air of a person doing involuntary penance. My mother, encouraging in herself an unwonted disposition to be compassionate, addressed to him some slight observation, which, at length, emboldened him to unclose his lips. Blanch was as much relieved by this distribution of his attention, as the gentle youth himself; and from the moment that she had the satisfaction of seeing that he no longer sat torturing his imagination for something to say to her, she was able to look around with ease and pleasure.

Mr. Crosby and Mr. Lloyd handed the tea about, and found abundant employment in also handing the muffins, toast, and cakes.

Every time Mr. Crosby approached Martha, seeing her look impenetrably solemn, he laboured to be encouragingly jocose, by way of cheering her spirits. But Martha, undiscerning, and in the present instance,

ungrateful, misconstrued all his efforts into obtrusive familiarity; and so repellant became her aspect, and so blunt were her concise answers, that despairing of his power to propitiate her, he desisted entirely from the attempt; and I heard him say to his wife, whilst replacing a cup in the ample tea board:

"There is no getting on at all with that poor Miss Martha; I don't know what to make of her;—she is not a bit like a young person."—

"Never mind her, Sam,—never mind her;—She is not a pleasant-looking girl, and my belief is, she is come here in a bad temper.—I am sure I would not let my lord dance with her for the world.—Carry the plum-cake to him again, my dear;—he used to love plum-cake; and offer some to his pretty partner that is to be.—Has not *she* a sweet face, Sam? and don't you remember my telling you how much I was taken with a girl I met one evening walking in the fields with lady Stavordale?—Well, that is the very girl!—But stand out of the way, Sam; I want to see whether she and our young lord

are getting sociable together.—Why! good gracious! they are not saying a word! What can be the reason, I wonder? Do, my dear, go and help them on a little;—I hate to see them sitting mum-chance, in that stupid way!"

Obedient to her wishes, Mr. Crosby armed himself once more with the plum-cake, and came up to the silent pair.

"My wife is afraid, my lord," said he, simpering, and glancing his eyes towards Blanch, "that you don't like your neighbourhood? Would you wish to go and sit on the other side of the room, by Mr. Lloyd?"—

The youth, looking very foolish, stammered out an assurance, that he had not any desire to remove. My mother, who, as I have observed, can feel for embarrassment not of her own creating, now said, to divert the subject:—"Has there not, my good Mr. Crosby, been some strange miscalculation here, with respect to age and stature?—Are the little people you have drawn up in such orderly array on each side the room, exactly adapted to figure with their tall leader, Lord

Earlsford?—When they all stand up, I fear me, he will look like a giant amongst pigmies."—

"Why true, my lady, true:—but the thing is, my wife was unwilling to invite any but the sons and daughters of our genteelest neighbours; and some how, none of the quite grown-up ones could make it convenient to come.—We did not," he added, lowering his voice, "think it right to introduce my lord to the families of mere people in business, like ourselves; else we might presently have collected together from Ashbourne twenty or thirty as smart young folks as you could wish to see. However, since you, my lady, and your daughters, have been kind enough to accept our invitation, we shall do capitally.—But, dear my lady, I wish you would give your beautiful granddaughter a hint to talk a little to our young lord.—He is too shy to begin first."—

"And so, I hope, is she, Sir," said my mother, laughing;—"You mistake her, perhaps, for one of the *quite grown-up* young people of whom you were just speaking: but her height misleads you:—She is a mere

child, and with strangers is as diffident, I am happy to say, as a child ought to be."—

"Dear me! is she so very young?—Why, now, I should have guessed her to be seventeen or eighteen.—I beg pardon, my lady, but what may really be her age!"

"You are right to beg my pardon, for these enquiries are, indeed, not very customary!—However, I have no objection, in this instance, to satisfy your curiosity. She is yet scarcely sixteen.—Now, do not proceed to ask me the ages of my daughters."—

"Dear, my lady, not for the world!—I am sure I never dreamed of taking such a liberty!"—

He then went back to his wife to repeat what he had just learned, and to observe, that since they were both so young, Miss Blanch and my lord might sit next each other from June to January without getting one bit better acquainted:

"So, my dear, you must make them stand up and dance as quick as you can; and then, I warrant, they will soon begin chatting."—

Anxious that this should be an evening of happiness to her favourite young guest, Lord

Earlsford; and persuaded, I suppose, that happiness and talking are inseparably connected, Mrs. Crosby did all in her power to expedite the process of tea-drinking amongst her tiny visitors; calling out to one: "Master Langley, my dear, I shall not fill your cup again, because, by and by, we are to have a little comfortable negus, and that I know you will like better."—To another; "Miss Paterson, my love, will you have a little more milk in your tea to cool it?—Or suppose you pour it into the saucer;—you will be able then, to gulp it down in a moment."—But Miss Paterson disregarding, or not comprehending the "*palpable obscure*" of this hint, declined both the milk and the expedient of the saucer, and went on sipping with deliberation so vexatious, that, at last, Mrs. Crosby's patience was quite exhausted, and she said to her husband: "My dear, we won't hurry the young lady; some people can't swallow fast: but I don't see the use of keeping this great table here, now every body else has done. So call Betty, my love, and let her help you to move it."

Betty came; she and her master, with

Mrs. Crosby as their auxiliary, disposed of the tea-board, urn, cakes, and table in a moment. The green baize upon which the whole apparatus had stood, was taken up, to do duty, as I afterwards suspected, between the cloth and supper-table in the parlour below; and an old man, the clerk of the parish, known by the name of *Tippling Timothy*, was ushered into the room with a brightly varnished fiddle in his hand, and stationed near the door. These preliminaries duly adjusted, Mrs Crosby clapped her hands, and called out, "Come, little gentlemen, lose no more time; get up and chuse your partners." Then, with more deference, addressing Lord Earlsford—"Will you please, my lord," said she, "to lead out Miss Blanch, and to tell honest Timothy what tune he shall play; he has not a great many in his budget: but he can play 'The Soldier's Joy' and 'Nancy Dawson' capitally. Which will you begin with?"

The youth bashfully referred the point to his selected partner, who looked at my mother and me to know how she should decide. We voted in favour of Nancy Dawson; and,

side by side, she and Lord Earlsford walked to the top of the room. Mr. Lloyd, urged on by winks and nods from the Crosbies, found himself obliged to offer his hand to Martha. I half expected that she would have refused him, having often heard her declare that all clergymen dance insufferably: but Mr. Lloyd is very handsome, and, moreover, there was no other young man present; and so Martha vouchsafed to accept him. Mr. Crosby, then, did *me* the honour to hope I would stand up with him; an honour I civilly, but very positively declined. What was my astonishment, however, when, the next minute, I heard the well-meaning but unadvised man, address the same solicitation to *my mother!*

"Me, sir!" she cried; "No—you must excuse me. Not being yet quite in my *second* childhood, I have no claim to shew off amongst so many who are in their *first!*"

There was something in the look and tone with which this was uttered, that sent poor Mr. Crosby away, shaking his ears, with an air of discomfiture from which it was some time before he entirely recovered.

The little masters and misses, with much

pushing and shoving by the notable lady of the house, were, at last, stationed in their proper places, and only one little girl remained unprovided with a partner: "Crosby," cried his wife, "step this way; we must not letany of our young friends sit still. I thought we should have mustered as many boys as girls; but I was mistaken, for here is an odd one, whom you must stand up with yourself."

Mr. Crosby, as good-tempered as his busy little wife, made no resistance, and old Timothy received a signal to begin.

The first sound of the wretched instrument, scraped with unmerciful vigour by its Midas-eared owner, almost drove my mother and me out of the room, and impelled Blanch, though heartily laughing, to apply her hands to the sides of her head in order to deaden the crash of so hideous a noise.

Accustomed to the sweetest music of Italy, and a musician herself, gifted with the most exquisite ear and taste, the shrill cries of poor Timothy's fiddle were as new as they were painful to her. How the Crosbies and

Mr. Lloyd bore it so well, she must have been at a loss to understand. Martha, I saw, listened with a direful increase of the "vinegar aspect" which she had hitherto worn; and Lord Earlsford, catching the infection from his lively but sensitive partner, laughed till he could hardly stand. This sympathy in mirth brought them immediately acquainted. They began to dance: very ill, indeed, at first, from uncontroulable risibility; but as they grew more accustomed to their Orpheus, somewhat better, and, at last, with real grace and spirit.

Being arrived at the bottom of the set, I observed that they engaged in conversation fluently, and without embarrassment. The youth's countenance, whilst talking, brightened up, and I soon began to think, that if not handsome *now*, he might, in time, pass for such, unless his manners should counteract the impression made by his face.

Mrs. Crosby witnessed the good understanding between him and his partner, with the most cordial satisfaction. She sat between me and my mother, and frequently called upon us to look at them: "See how sociable

they are become, my lady; only watch them a moment, Miss Stavordale.—I declare it does my heart good to find the pretty souls willing, at last, to be so comfortable. Crosby said how it would be when once they began dancing. I am glad I did not let them wait any longer, for there is no knowing how late your other daughter may be before she comes. I suppose she wants to bring her fine London hours into fashion amongst us; but it would have been a pity to spoil a child's frolic, like this, by such notions:—would it not my lady?"

"Yes, indeed, I think so; for the sooner the frolic is begun, the sooner we may hope it will end!"

"End, my lady! why I do not mean to let them leave off these three hours!—I hope you are not thinking of taking Miss Blanch away before twelve o'clock?"

"Do you expect then," resumed my mother, looking very gravely at old Timothy, "that the machine which you have set in motion for present service, can continue its operations till twelve o'clock?—It must fall to pieces before that time!"

"What, Tim's fiddle!—No, no, my lady! it will hold out many a long evening yet:—It was new only a few months ago; for, poor Tim, in coming home rather late one night from a merry-making at Storriton (I believe it was a christening), fell down, and either broke his old fiddle, or lost it in the brook. I am afraid he was a little in liquor!—that is poor Tim's grand failing: but we all of us have some foolish trick to answer for, so I think it is but fair that we should have a little indulgence for one another; and Mr. Crosby is of my mind; so we clubbed, he and I, and a few neighbours, and made up a little purse amongst us, to enable Tim to buy a new fiddle. We have a good right, therefore, you see my lady, to make him play when we have any young people to entertain; and he is still very strong in the arms, and would do almost as well as ever, if it was not for that unlucky fondness of his, for the ale-house."

"Oh, that he were there at this moment!" whispered my mother, turning to me.

Whilst she was speaking, a new dance was begun, led off by Martha and Mr. Lloyd;

and in the midst of it, entered Philippa and my father. The fashion and elegance of her appearance gave her so decided a superiority over our less favoured younger sister, that the Crosbies were quite charmed with her. The short quick curtsies, and the smiles of welcome that had attended the arrival of my mother, were renewed with more cordiality than ever; and Philippa, who it was evident had come prepared to keep a guard over her looks, and to be all affability and sweetness, returned the worthy woman's civilities with a complacency that astonished even *me*, who know so well the readiness of her Proteus-like powers. The first sight, however, of lord Earlsford,—the discovery that he was so mere a boy, obviously disconcerted her; and for some minutes her countenance was completely overcast; but, presently recovering, and reflecting, perhaps, that it might be no bad policy to appear amiable in the eyes of one whose feeble note of praise might be of some value at Bovil Court and East Vale, she cleared her brow, and declining to take a seat, stationed herself near him to watch his progress down the dance. Mrs.

Crosby remained beside her, enchanted to observe the direction which her eyes had taken, and exultingly saying, "Is he not a fine youth, Miss Philippa? does he not dance surprisingly well?"

Convinced that his Lordship overheard every word that was spoken, Philippa assented to it all with the most winning smiles; and Mrs. Crosby, encouraged by her ready attention, thus went on: "He has got a delightful young partner. She bounds along like a cork;—it is difficult to say which is the most nimble-footed. They are the nicest match I ever saw; she is as nearly his own age as can be,—a mere child; but that, you know, Miss Philippa, is so much the better; for what nonsense it would be for him to be standing up with a woman-grown, and fancying himself old enough to play the gallant!—Time enough for such foolery as that, poor love! half a dozen years hence."

I could perceive that this speech, uttered in no inaudible voice, was wormwood to our young Viscount. Just at the age to be particularly jealous of his manly consequence, he could not endure to hear himself men-

tioned in terms so degrading to his pretensions. Much as he had liked Blanch a few moments before, he now felt impatient to shake her off. She was pronounced to be a *mere child*; and he thought it impossible, whilst attending upon her, to be considered in any other light himself. The consequence of this apprehension was, an instantaneous change in his aspect and manners;—a change so undisguised, that not only Philippa and I marked and understood it, but Blanch looked at him with surprise, and innocently said, "Are you tired?" He coldly answered, no; and till the dance ended, spoke not another word.

Blanch, too much a novice in the ways of the world, to understand any thing of the caprices of conceit; and too lively to perplex herself long about any thing that was disagreeable, continued dancing with almost unabated spirit; and as soon as the set broke up, walked back to my mother and me. Philippa, prepared, I dare say, for what would follow, went at the same moment, and sat down by Martha.

Whilst a copious supply of warm jellies,

negus, and cakes of every description was distributing from an enormous tray, rolled in for the occasion upon our old friend the round table, moving on casters, Lord Earlsford went up to Mrs. Crosby, and interrupting her in the business of filling glasses, and slicing cake, said something to her in a low voice, the tendency of which I immediately guessed by overhearing her answer.

"Why, sure my Lord," she cried in a deprecating tone, "Sure, you would not forsake the pretty creature you have been dancing with all this time? Have you not got over the worst? the difficulty of making acquaintance with her? and do you not find her very affable and pleasant?"

The youth muttered some answer which seemed terribly to disappoint her; but unable to deny him any thing, she promised, however reluctantly, to attend to his wishes as soon as the children had all been served with refreshments; asked him to have some negus; lamented once or twice his intended desertion of pretty Miss Blanch, and resumed the occupation from which he had, for an interval, withdrawn her.

The little people having been helped, and re-helped to perfect satiety, the round table was once more put in motion, and seen to roll *out* of the room with nearly as much satisfaction as it had originally been seen to roll *into* it. Mrs. Crosby, then, followed at some distance by the slender Peer, approached Philippa: but before she could draw near enough to speak to her, Mr. Lloyd, unsuspicious of her purpose, anticipated the request which she meant to make, and secured the prize for himself. The circumstance was, I doubt not, as unwelcome to Philippa as to her baffled young beau: but to Mrs. Crosby it was a most satisfactory occurrence; and exhorting her pet to rest content with the partner he had hitherto had, she endeavoured to lead him towards her. He petulantly, however, snatched from her his hand, and, in the anger of the moment, spoke loud enough for me to hear him say: "It is the most tiresome thing in the world to dance always with the same person! If I cannot have a partner I like, I shall sit still till my mother's carriage comes."

"Sit still!" echoed Mrs. Crosby, quite

dismayed: "My dear love, what are you talking of?—You know very well that I got this little party together on purpose to make you happy, and it would fret me to death to see you discontented!—Only tell me *what* I can do to please you, and I am sure there is nothing I would not set about, rather than have the vexation of thinking you had not spent a comfortable evening!"

Like all humoursome people, who, the more they are courted, the more untractable they become, this sprig of quality made no other answer to his kind-hearted hostess, than stalking sullenly away, and seating himself unsociably in a remote part of the room.

Mrs. Crosby could not endure that he should thus be thwarted, and stepping up to Mr. Lloyd, she privately, as he afterwards confessed to my sister, solicited him to resign Miss Philippa, because her dear young Lord wished to dance with her himself.

Mr. Lloyd is not a man so easily to be worked upon; he had some difficulty to forbear laughing, but positively resisted such

an usurpation; advising Mrs. Crosby to tell Lord Earlsford, that, if he was resolved to have a new partner, the best thing he could do would be to engage Miss Martha.

"No, that it is not, Mr. Lloyd;" cried she in great dudgeon; and then, Philippa heard her add: "I could not bear to see him dancing with that sour-faced girl! I wish he would make up his mind to take out the same pretty creature he danced with before."

"And why does he hesitate?"

"I don't know—hardly—but I believe, somehow, the poor dear fellow is tired of her!"

The plaintive tone in which Mrs. Crosby innocently made this answer, was quite too much for Mr. Lloyd's powers of self-command; and he ran off to another part of the room as expeditiously as he could, unwilling to shock her by the sight of his irrepressible mirth.

The good lady, finding all other resources fail, was at last reduced *herself* to forward an engagement between her testy favorite and our uninteresting Martha. Philippa

looked provoked; Martha elated; Mrs. Crosby half ready to cry; and Mr. Lloyd amused: whilst Blanch, thus uncourteously abandoned, had no alternative but to sit still, or to stand up with a little girl, for there yet remained an "odd one." She preferred the latter measure, and took her place in the new set that was forming.

My mother and I looked on with a double motive for dissatisfaction. We were annoyed that Martha, who had behaved to the Crosbies so churlishly, should be chosen by the individual who was considered as the principal personage of the party; and we were sorry that Blanch, who so well bore the slight which she had met with, should have been exposed to such a mortification. To be either sorry or annoyed, however, altered nothing in the case; and whilst I still sat looking on, my mother, to divert her chagrin, began talking with Mr. Crosby upon the expediency of introducing vaccination into the neighbouring village.

Meanwhile, the dance proceeded, and without having addressed to each other a single sentence, Martha, and her titled

partner reached the bottom of the room. Towards Blanch, he invariably avoided casting his eyes; those of Philippa often rested upon him, and the expression they assumed was so flattering to his incipient vanity, that his conscious looks perpetually sought hers, and his thin pale visage was bedecked by simpers which my too-coquettish sister reciprocated with a softness the most treacherously alluring. Had these tender eye-beams been prolonged to the end of the evening, the foolish boy might probably have been duped into a belief that the fair nymph had lost her heart to him, and that, in exchange, it was necessary to surrender his own. But fortunately for him, Philippa's attention, just at this crisis of his fate, was wholly attracted to another object.

As the dance was concluding, our friend Mr. Westcroft, accompanied by another gentleman, appeared at the door of the ball-room, and remained stationary some minutes to survey the assembled party. My mother and I were equally prepossessed by the fine countenance and figure of the stranger, and dying with curiosity to know who he was.

We applied for information to Mr. Crosby, who rising hastily to receive his new guests, merely stopped to tell us, that the gentleman's name was Tremayne. We now understood that the person before us was the son, by her first marriage, of Lady Earlsford, and the favourite nephew of Sir Reginald Tourberville.

How unlike his puny half-brother!—He appears to be about five or six-and-twenty; looks active and animated; has a remarkably fine figure, a graceful address, and a countenance at once the most spirited and the most indicative of good temper I have ever seen.

Whilst I sat thus agreeably engaged in contemplating our unexpected volunteer, Mrs. Crosby, at the summit of human felicity—smiling, curtsying, almost *crowing* with joy, was stuttering forth her thanks for the high honour he did her, and venting such a torrent of self-congratulations, that without turning from her with a rudeness which does not seem to be in his nature, he had no opportunity, for many minutes, of attending to any one but herself. As soon as it was pos-

sible to obtain a reprieve from the wife, and a cessation of civilities, almost as oppressive, from the husband, he left the coast clear for Mr. Westcroft to come in for *his* share of their overstrained politeness; and approaching his brother, held out his hand to him, saying, in a tone as friendly as his look, "Well, Earlsford, have you been happy?"

Before the youth could reply, Mrs. Crosby, overhearing the word *happy*, again bustled towards her elegant visitor; and Philippa, whose ears are as quick as her eyes, stood near enough to distinguish the following speech:—"Ah, poor love! he *might* have been happy, for I got him the prettiest, the nicest partner in the room—the flower of our neighbourhood!—But my belief is, the poor dear fellow owes himself a spite; for, all at once, he left the sweet creature in the lurch, and chose to stand up with one of her aunts—(*that* is her, tying on her shoe near the windows)—a peevish-looking body, who has never smiled since she came into the room."

This was more than could be said for Mr. Tremayne, whilst listening to so curious a

lamentation; and at its conclusion, directing a glance towards Martha, "I must own," he cried, "that Earlsford has not selected for himself a lady whose countenance is very engaging. Who is she?"

Mrs. Crosby, now recollecting the vicinity of Philippa, drew him away; and I saw her successively pointing us all out to him—though with what comments, I had no means of knowing. Whilst this was passing, Mr. Westcroft, having disengaged himself from his host, and spoken to my father, drew near my mother and me, and took a seat beside us. He told us that he had been dining at Bovil-Court, where this annual *gala* of Mrs. Crosby's having been repeatedly mentioned, his friend Tremayne had expressed a great wish to take a peep at what was going forward; and, accordingly, the carriage which Lady Earlsford intended to send for her younger son, was ordered an hour earlier, and had brought the elder and himself to the scene of action.

"But what execrable music you have had!" continued he—"If I were not afraid of affronting Goody Crosby, I would go down

for Lady Earlsford's foreign servant, who came with us behind the carriage, and bring him up to supersede your miserable old clerk."

"I wish you would," cried my mother.

"Ask Mrs. Crosby's leave, however, first," said I; "she is so good-natured, that a little mark of respect of that kind will prevent all danger of her taking the thing amiss."

Mr. Westcroft followed my advice; and whilst he was gone, several of the younger children were sent for home. Mrs. Crosby regretted extremely the necessity of allowing them to depart; had all their bonnets and shawls, hats and great-coats, brought into the room, that she might wrap them up warm herself; loaded them with papers of macaroons and sweet biscuits; kissed them all round, and sent them away with a thousand thanks and compliments to their papas and mammas, whom she promised to call upon next day, to tell them what *very* good children they had been.

Despairing of being heard during all this fuss, Mr. Westworth came back to us, arm in arm with Mr. Tremayne.

"I have no chance," cried he, "of gaining attention till Mrs. Crosby's paroxysm of hospitality is a little abated: so I have brought you a friend of mine, Lady Stavordale, who is very desirous of the honour of your acquaintance: allow me to introduce Mr. Tremayne to you, and to your daughter."

Bows and smiles, and the customary forms of civility on these occasions having passed, our two gentlemen, seeing no better means of accommodation at hand, dragged forward between them one of the benches on which the *row of boys* had been stationed, and placing it opposite our chairs, seated themselves, and began conversing with all the ease and vivacity that belongs to men accustomed to society, and happily provided with something to say.

Soon after this little arrangement had been made, Philippa and my father joined us, and the ceremony of presentation was of course repeated. Mr. Tremayne looked at my sister with evident admiration; and I could not but allow, that I had never seen her appear to greater advantage. The lurking spirit of

vanity within, evinced itself outwardly only by heightening the damask of her cheeks, the lustre of her eyes, and the fascination of her smiles. She was well-dressed; well disposed for conquest; her manners, when she pleases, are most polished; and she possesses, though now living in comparative seclusion, such ready powers of conversation, that were she but blessed with *one* art more—(the art of better masking her designs from men of sense and observation)—Philippa might, by this time, have been mistress of all that her ambition most covets,—title, precedence, wealth, and celebrity. My mother, though apt to laugh at her schemes, undoubtedly cherishes at heart many a wish for her success; and in good truth, so do I. She is now, I admit, an artificial and contriving character: but once prosperously established, I verily believe, there is *that* in her, which would make her a valuable and endearing, perhaps even—a domestic wife.

Whilst these thoughts were passing in my mind, and I sat watching the gradual advantages which she seemed to be gaining over Mr. Tremayne, my eyes accidentally wan-

dered to the other side of the room, and there I beheld poor Blanch seated by herself at an open window, looking very pale, and rubbing her temples and forehead with lavender water. My heart smote me for having so long neglected her, and immediately rising, I went to enquire what was the matter. She told me, that the heat and closeness of the room, and two *terrible* glasses of negus which Mrs. Crosby had obliged her to drink, had given her the headache; and asked me whether I should be afraid of catching cold by going down with her a little while to walk upon the grass-plat in front of the house? The night was calm and warm, and the moon shone so temptingly, that I hesitated not a moment in complying with her wishes. Mr. Westcroft seeing us pass, and observing that Blanch looked unwell, came to us, and hearing where we were going, offered her his arm, and asked leave to accompany us.

Ten minutes walk in the refreshing open air, gave her so much relief, that, though reluctantly, we were beginning to talk of returning, when, from the drawing-room win-

dow, we heard the voice of Mrs. Crosby, calling out, "Mr. Westcroft!—Miss Blanch! you are wanted;—they are going to dance one of your fine French *cowtillions*, as they used to be called in my youth, and they can't do without you at all."

We did not much hurry ourselves to obey the summons: but we *did* obey it, and in our way through the passage leading from the house door to the narrow stairs, observed enormous preparations making in the parlour for supper. A table was set out, which the maid and a dirty shop-boy were loading with cold fowls, meat-pies, tarts, creams, custards, confectionery, and fruit. Chairs were closely packed together down each side of the formidable-looking banquet, and doubts arose in my mind, seeing how little space remained between them and the wall, whether the maid or her assisting Ganymede, when once the guests were placed, would ever be able either to get *in* or *out* of the room. Blanch looked at all this with mingled nausea and amazement; and Mr. Westcroft, putting his head in at the door, "whilst," as he observed, "it was still safe so to do," declared, that so

strong a smell of physic issued from Mr. Crosby's shop, adjoining to the supper-room, that it totally overpowered every other odour, and would, to a creative fancy, convert all the dainties upon the board into medicinal potions.

Blanch, turning away, asked, with great simplicity, whether it was customary in all English houses, to provide at their parties so much unnecessary food?

"Take things upon an average," answered Mr. Westcroft, "and in every house you are treated pretty much alike: in some they give too much; in others, too little. At the year's end, the balance between profusion and parsimony is nearly even."

On entering the dancing-room, where our presence seemed to have been very impatiently desired, we found that poor Timothy had actually been deposed; that the foreigner, spoken of by Mr. Westcroft, had been ordered up stairs by Mr. Tremayne, and occupied in state the usurped chair, and what was more humiliating still, had gained uncontested possession of the varnished fiddle, and well-rosined fiddle-stick of his rueful

rival. Two or three couple were standing up, ready to begin whenever the requisite number for a quadrille could be collected; Philippa was the partner of Mr. Tremayne; Martha had again devolved to Mr. Lloyd; Mr. Westcroft, I found, had been appropriated to *me*, who, however, declined the honour, and was about to transfer him, 'nothing loth,' to his favourite Blanch, when Mrs. Crosby, seeing that this arrangement would leave for Lord Earlsford only one of the elder girls of the children's set, eagerly interfered, saying, "No, no, Mr. Westcroft, you must not make my Lord dance with that little creature! Let him have Miss Blanch. I know you do not care whom you stand up with."

Before Mr. Westcroft could contradict this assertion, Mrs. Crosby, charmed at the prospect of re-uniting them, led her young Peer towards Blanch, and much elated, said, "There my Lord! I have got your pretty partner for you again! Take her, and thank me; for I do not know what you would have done without her." But Blanch, uninfluenced by this flattering mode of being

tendered to the youth's acceptance, drew back with a half-smile, and said, "I have danced as much as I wish." And then, turning gently away, she walked to a chair next to my mother, and sat down.

Mr. Westcroft looked after her in silent surprise; for as he knew nothing of what had previously occurred between the young people, he was at a loss to account for a rejection so drily laconic. Mr. Tremayne, however, recollecting to have heard that his brother had given her some cause of complaint, followed her with his eyes as she retreated, and laughing, said, "If this is revenge, it is the prettiest, the quietest revenge I ever saw!"

My. mother received her triumphantly; and many of the party, as well as herself, witnessed the transaction with an air of glee. It was *my* fate to suffer by it the most; for Philippa, unwilling to give up her intended quadrille, urged me so much to dance, that I was forced to comply. The poor little girl who had just before been so unhandsomely rejected, was now gladly admitted into the set (though not as Lord Earlsford's partner,

but as Mr. Lloyd's), and our new musician was called upon to strike up. With many blunders, but great good humour, the arduous undertaking was accomplished: and thus began and terminated the quadrille dancing of the evening, as I positively resisted all intreaties to stand up a second time. Something was afterwards said by Mr. Tremayne about *waltzing*, to which I saw that Philippa had some difficulty to avoid lending a yielding ear; but as there was no other female willing to wkp her in countenance, and as she well knows that my mother is not a cordial friend to that species of dance, she had the fortitude to wave the subject, and the humility to rest satisfied, till supper-time, with engrossing the larger share of Mr. Tremayne's conversation, whilst he again occupied his comfortless seat near my mother and her party. Some of the younger individuals present danced reels, and Lord Earlsford, probably to avoid Blanch and her friends, was one of the number.

Mr. Westcroft made me tell him the whole history of their disagreement, which, though it drew from him a smile, did not

dispose him entirely to exculpate Blanch for having refused the youth with so little ceremony.—"You perhaps are not aware," said he to her, "that it is the established custom to change partners at the end of every second country dance?"

"Oh, yes, cried she, "I knew that."—

"Then why did you resent his leaving you when his engagement was over?"—

"That was not what I *did* resent; it was his caprice and ill-humour *before* he left me that provoked me to disappoint him when I was wanted for the quadrille. I perfectly understand, that Mrs. Crosby had no right, though she might chuse to wish it, to impose the same partner upon him for a whole evening; but it is just *as* certain, that he had no right to behave to that partner with causeless rudeness."

I was not sorry to observe, that while she was speaking, the attention of Mr. Tremayne, though Philippa was talking to him at the moment, seemed caught, and his eyes rested upon her face with the air of a man anxious to hear what was passing. The impression made upon him by her frank and

rational explanation, I have reason to think, was such as did her no disservice; for, frequently afterwards, his looks strayed towards her, and he more than once neglected answering Philippa or my mother, in order to lean forward and join in the conversation passing between Mr. Westcroft, Blanch, and myself. Nothing of all this was lost upon Philippa; and many a secret wish, I have no doubt, she formed, that Blanch were still in Italy! but she was too wise to betray her discontent where it might produce a permanent ill effect: she yielded, therefore, to the present bent of the tide, and yielded, perhaps, with the better grace, from believing that where Blanch will have one opportunity of attracting the notice of Mr. Tremayne, she herself will have twenty. But I shrewdly suspect, that she is mistaken. My mother is too proud of the beauty of her granddaughter, and too little disposed to conform (at least here in the country) to the system of rigidly shutting up girls till a given age, if their manners and appearance entitle them to enter earlier into society, to hesitate in

taking her wherever she may anticipate either for her amusement or admiration.

The call to supper, which but few of the party were prepared for, excited considerable surprise, and the word was successively repeated, with exclamations denoting the general unwillingness to contribute to the consumption of any more provisions that night. But Mrs. Crosby was inexorable; she *would* compel us to descend, and crowd into her slip of a parlour; she *would* cut up as many fowls as might have dined a company of hungry travellers; and she *would* load all our plates, till the very sight of the food heaped up before us made us ill. My mother had scarcely command of temper sufficient to bear the penance with tolerable patience; and the only thing that helped to support her through it, was the playfulness and good-humour with which Mr. Tremayne turned the whole "into a mirth-moving jest;" managed, however, with such discretion, as to escape giving the slightest wound to the feelings of our hostess.

When our nominal repast (for such the

abundant distribution of previous refreshments compelled us to make it) was over, Mrs. Crosby, as alert and full of spirits as if the evening had only just begun, whispered to me as I sat next her, "I suppose one must not propose to you fine folks; and to Mr. Tremayne, and all, a good merry game of forfeits?"

I did not very warmly encourage the experiment; but observed, that as it was growing late, I thought there would not be time for any thing of that sort.

"Oh, time!" cried she, "you would none of you think of time if you were but amused! I *must* set something a going, for I can't bear that the party should break up yet!"

She then, as a substitute for forfeits, ventured to apply to Philippa, whom she knew to be musical, for a song, and Mr. Westcroft warmly seconded the motion.

Philippa, unused to sing without accompaniment, felt not quite certain, that in so difficult an undertaking she should acquit herself to her own credit; yet, as Mr. Tremayne, on being told by his friend that she was the best *dillettante* musician he had ever heard,

joined in the petition, she made a merit of overcoming, at his request, her reluctance; and trusting to the richness of her voice, its compass and flexibility, selected a beautiful little Italian air, and executed it in a manner that even surpassed her own hopes, and left nothing to wish, except that it had been longer.—Martha was not qualified to follow her lead; she was asked, but muttered out an awkwark and ungracious refusal. Blanch was then applied to, and my mother seemed disposed to encourage the attempt; but Philippa, who had remarked with reviving spirits, that her own voice had power to recal and arrest the attention of Mr. Tremayne, had no desire that he should hear the beautiful tones of her apprehended competitor. With incomparable skill, disguising the real motives of her interference, and dressing her face in the utmost good-humour, she said, looking at Blanch, "Poor dear girl! she seems tired to death, and half asleep!—I am sure she is not in a state to do herself justice to-night; and it would be cruelty to urge her to sing, whilst she is evidently so oppressed with drowsiness and fatigue."

Blanch required little encouragement to hold back from an undertaking which nothing but her deference to the implied wishes of her grand-mother had ever induced her to hesitate in declining. With no desire to attract attention; with scarcely yet a suspicion of her own vocal superiority (for in the country where her powers have been cultivated, musical excellence is not the uncommon advantage which it is here), she was pleased to be furnished with an excuse to avoid the exertion, and thanked my kind sister for her welcome interposition. My mother directed towards Philippa a sly glance of congratulation upon the success of her ingenuity; and soon after, in defiance of all poor Mrs. Crosby's supplications, we resolutely arose, took leave of her, and came home.

My father went yesterday morning to pay his first visit to Sir Reginald Tourberville.—The old Baronet was out riding; so he left his card, and returned hither, to accompany

my Mother, Philippa, and me, to Bovil-Court, where it was necessary he should call upon Mr. Tremayne, who is at present a guest there, and not at East Vale. Martha wished much to have gone with us: but she dared not ask; for though my Mother had said nothing since Mrs. Crosby's dance, of her churlish behaviour that night, she had no expectation of escaping the lecture which she so well merited; and felt assured, that the first favour she applied for, would not only call that lecture forth, but meet with a positive negative. During breakfast, therefore, whilst the subject of our visit to Lady Earlsford was under discussion, she sat entirely silent: but there was in her looks such evident chagrin at not being included in the party, that my father with his accustomed kind-heartedness, said, addressing my Mother: "My dear, you will take Martha with you as well as her two sisters, will you not? I see that she longs to go!"

"Does she, sweet soul?—It would be a pity to disappoint her, and a pity also to disappoint Mr. Tremayne, who, after what passed between us at Mrs. Crosby's, must

naturally have a great desire to see her again! We found an opportunity, that evening, before we parted, reciprocally to congratulate each other on the possession, he of a brother, I of a daughter, who, search the world round, could not be matched for ill-breeding and folly. We both agreed, that since they *had* taken that turn, it was creditable to them not to do the thing by halves; not to flinch in their rudeness; and we did them the justice to allow, that two more finished patterns of puppyism in one sex, and vulgar impertinence in the other, had never come under our observation."

Martha, weak and credulous, heard this with serious affright. Long as she had been familiarized with my Mother's peculiarity of humour, her intellects are so slow, that she is still often puzzled to distinguish between what she says ironically, and what she means in earnest. On the present occasion, the apprehension of being thought ill of by Mr. Tremayne, and, through him, by Lady Earlsford, gave her such disturbance, that, in a voice that indicated an approaching cry, she said, "I'm sure I did nothing so very

bad;—nothing that need have made you complain of me to a stranger!"

"Complain!—Did I not, on the contrary, speak of you with pride and exultation?—My other daughters were satisfied to exhale their contempt of Mrs. Crosby at home: but *you* frankly exhibited it to her in her own house;—displayed it magnanimously to herself and all her guests in every word, look, and gesture. Mr. Lloyd duly came in for his share, as, in justice, a mere insignificant country curate deserved. Such paltry people have no right to intrude into *our* society.—With *our* fortune, *our* talents, and above all *our* graces and attractions, we are privileged to be fastidious. What are curates and apothecaries to a lovely coheiress of the house of Stavordale!"

Martha now began to sob in complete earnest. My mother heard her with contemptuous indifference. My father and Blanch were sorry for her; but Philippa and I had too frequently witnessed such scenes, and knew too well the provocation which she gives for them, to bestow much thought upon her present vexation. She has alas! so little

to recommend her, either in temper, understanding, or manners, that we cannot feel for her that warm sympathy to which the nearness of our relationship seems to entitle her. Yet, some occasional traits of goodness of heart, some temporary intermissions of irritability, enable us to tolerate her defects with general indulgence.

The visit to Bovil Court was productive of more gratification to our curiosity than that of my father to East Vale. Lady Earlsford was at home, and immediately admitted us. To judge of her by what appeared during this first, and rather short interview; she is both agreeable and well-bred. Her countenance exhibits great animation, and is still strikingly beautiful; her person is dignified, and her deportment graceful. In conversation she betrays considerable energy, I will not say of mind, but of feeling; she uses strong expressions, and uses them, as I am persuaded, not from mere habit, but from what, in a woman of her age and rank is so rarely met with—genuine and still-unblunted warmth of disposition. Upon the whole,

she made the most favourable and pleasing impression upon us all, and for nothing more than for being so perfectly natural in every look and word, and so admirably devoid of the slightest taint of pride and self-importance.

She told my father, that she much regretted the absence of her eldest son, who, she added, was out on horseback with Sir Reginald Tourberville. "His brother," she continued, smiling, "is, I hope, where he ought to be,—engaged in study with Mr. Lloyd: he is not of an age yet, either to give much pleasure to morning visitors, or to receive it from them, and I seldom impose upon him or upon them the penance of compelling him to appear."

She then began to speak of the party at Mrs. Crosby's. "You were very good, Lady Stavordale, and very amiable," she said, "to afford her the gratification of your presence. I believe, in general, that she is excluded from the higher class of society in this neighbourhood, and, perhaps, her manners may, in some degree, justify the mea-

sure: but were the goodness of her heart taken into consideration, I think it would more than outweigh her deficiencies in point of elegance. There cannot possibly be a more friendly, and—to use the word in its best sense—officious, obliging creature than Mrs. Crosby. I shall always think that the recovery of my boy from the most dangerous illness that any child ever *did* recover from, is more to be attributed to her unremitting assiduity in nursing him, than to her husband's skill in prescribing for him." Then, changing to a gayer tone, "Our friend Westcroft," she added, "laughs at the poor dear woman, and at me, too, for trying, as he chuses to say, to work myself up to be romantic about her! Tremayne, also, presumes to be saucy upon the subject; but I let them have their jest; and shall not think myself bound one atom the less, to acknowledge, and, as far as it may be in my power, to repay my debt of gratitude to Mrs. Crosby. But, à prôpos to Mr. Westcroft—Lady Stavordale, he tells me that you have a grand-daughter lately come over from Switzerland or Italy, who is the greatest

prodigy of beauty he ever beheld! I wish you had brought her with you: she is not too young to visit, I hope."

"In London she would be deemed so, I believe; but here, that fault, I flatter myself may be overlooked."

"Oh, certainly—certainly! In these retired places, where no real dissipation can be attained, it is ridiculous to stand upon the punctilio of a year more or less, in order to permit girls to enjoy the few opportunities of amusement which the thinness of the population may afford. I have a favourite young kinswoman coming hither, who, perhaps, may be guilty of numbering no more summers than your grand-daughter, yet I mean to take her wherever there shall appear the smallest chance of diversion. Poor thing!" she added, half sighing, "her life has hitherto been any thing but gay. She is motherless, and worse, alas! than fatherless.—I am speaking, Lady Stavordale, of Jane Tourberville, my brother's grand-daughter. The pitiable predicament in which she stands, can be no secret, I am well assured, to any one in this neighbourhood.

It was from hence, at least from East Vale, that her unnatural father so disgracefully effected his flight from a wife the most amiable, the most worthy to be beloved, of any woman I have ever known. She was my bosom friend; and she died in my arms!—Her child, with many of her mother's attaching qualities, inherits her mother's station in my heart. She is slighted—undervalued—almost cast off by my prejudiced brother!—By *me*, she shall ever be countenanced and cherished!—I bespeak for her, your favour, Lady Stavordale; I bespeak for her the kindness and support of your daughters! You will find her, in every sense of the word, deserving your regard!" My mother said all that was proper on the occasion; Philippa and I professed ourselves much flattered by the injunction, and shortly after we took leave.

"I suspect," cried my mother, as soon as the carriage drove on, "I suspect that, to any keen observer of character, the contrast between lady Earlsford and me would afford exquisite amusement. *She* is all enthusiasm, *I* am all phlegm; she sees every thing in

colours either of resplendent brilliancy or of ebon darkness;—I view most events with suspended judgment, and somewhat suspicious eyes! *My* taste for the ridiculous would shock her; *her* flights of sentiment would give me the vapours!—Yet, take her for all in all,—a fading beauty, a viscountess, and a wealthy widow,—she is truly engaging, and singularly meritorious. There is no affectation about her; nothing consequential; and her over-exaltation of feeling, though such as I could more easily pardon in girlhood than in a woman of mature years, wants only, to be respectable, a better race of fellow-beings to deserve it!"

Aug. 20th.

Yesterday morning (Sunday) a brighter sun and a clearer sky than we have had for some days, tempted my mother to resolve upon walking to our village church, and leaving the poor horses to enjoy the comforts of an undisturbed Sabbath. Blanch and I

were her only companions; my father feeling some threats of the gout; Philippa having a cold; and Martha (no unusual circumstance with her) not having risen early enough to have even *begun* breakfast before we set out.

During the progress of our short walk, a change in our plan suggested itself, occasioned by the discovery that we had left home too soon for Hazleford church, and that there would be excellent time for proceeding, if we chose it, to hear Mr. Lloyd at Storriton. Blanch, willing, probably, as the weather was so inviting, to prolong, as much as possible, the pleasure of remaining out of doors, petitioned earnestly in favour of Storriton; and my mother, finding that I made no opposition to the request, cheerfully complied.

Through shady lanes, and deliciously fragrant hay-fields, we pursued our way, and arrived within sight of the picturesque little church of Storriton, just as the cracked bell in its steeple was ceasing to toll. We quickened our pace, and with several straggling

country-people who, like ourselves, had loitered along the pleasant road more leisurely than was prudent, passed through the rustic porch, and entered the consecrated building in time to avoid the disgrace of being too late for the beginning of the service. A portly lady, whom we afterwards found to be the wife of Dr. Dulverton, the Rector, very civilly opened her pew-door as we advanced, and offered us the accommodation of seats, a courtesy which we gladly accepted.

Mr. Lloyd in his white surplice, now came forward from the vestry, and reminded me, as with a serious and collected look he deliberately walked up the aisle, of a handsome young apostle in one of Raffaelle's pictures. He had ascended the reading-desk, and all eyes were fixed upon him (this, I believe, being only the second time that he had done duty at Storriton), when the noise made by the rapid approach of a carriage along the ill-paved village-street, and the sudden halt of the vehicle at the church-porch, withdrew from him, for a while, the attention of many of the congregation, and caused those very

eyes which had been riveted upon him, to wander towards the door at which the newcomer must enter.

Mrs. Dulverton was one of the first to stand up, and gaze in eager expectation of seeing something unusual. She looked vexed, I thought, as she arose, and took a side-long view of the numbers in her pew, that no room remained to invite into it a fresh occupant. However, her regret, if indeed she felt any, was soon put an end to, by seeing a servant in a rich livery precede a tall elderly gentleman up the aisle, open the door of a curtained pew near the altar, and, after having deposited within it the splendid prayer-book which he had carried, draw back to leave space for his master to enter.

"Why, dear me!" whispered Mrs. Dulverton, "Who can that be? He is gone into lady Earlsford's pew."

As we could give her no information but such as must be entirely conjectural, we forbore to answer her; and Mr. Lloyd having now began the prayers, she refrained from further questions. Yet, as the service pro-

ceeded, though her lips moved at every response, she could scarcely for a moment withdraw her eyes from the curtained pew, or overcome the childish anxiety she felt to know something more about the stranger by whom it was taken possession of. In London such an instance of idle curiosity would rarely occur: in the country, and especially among persons in the middling class of life, the thing is almost too common to deserve notice. I rejoice, however, to find, that the labouring people, the real villagers, both men and women, are more exempt from this petty inquisitiveness than those in a rank somewhat above them. If their thoughts wander from what the minister is saying, they probably recur to their own concerns, they calculate the expected amount of their next week's earnings; they meditate upon the profits they shall derive from the sale of their pigs, poultry, eggs, and butter: — in short, if they sometimes look vacant and inattentive, they do not, at least, look prying and restless. But the richer inhabitants of a village, — those who are denominated its gentry; with every physical want supplied;

with nothing to sell, and but slender means to buy, are in the pitiable predicament, for lack of intellectual resources, of having scarcely a single thing to think of. How, then, can they withstand the temptation, if a stranger come in their way, of seeking to know all that *can* be known of that stranger's rank, dwelling-place, business, and circumstances?

But, to return to Mr. Lloyd. We were all much pleased with the manner in which he proceeded through the service. The whole duty devolved upon him; and he went through it from beginning to end with unabated reverence, distinctness, and propriety. His voice is good; his emphasis correct, and often impressive; and his aspect unaffectedly earnest. The discourse he gave us was admirably suited to his rural congregation; yet, clear and simple as was its language, it wanted none of those graces of style which, at the same time that they arrest the attention of the educated, soar not too high for the intelligence of the ignorant. It caught, at last, the ear, and sobered the perturbed spirit of our, previously, unsettled mistress of the pew. No longer perpetually veering

her head about, or getting up one minute to sit down the next, she was listening as composedly as ourselves; when, towards the end of the sermon, the unwelcome circumstance forced itself upon our notice, that the weather was about to change. An ill-boding darkness had insensibly succeeded to the early brilliancy of the morning, and ere long, so tremendous a clap of thunder pealed over our heads, that it seemed to vibrate through the whole building, and electrified all the auditory. Torrents of rain presently descended, which beat with such fury upon the roof, and against the rattling casements, that Mr. Lloyd found it difficult to contend with the noise, and to make his voice distinguishable through it. My mother, reflecting upon her distance from home, looked discomforted and anxious;—she whispered to me, "This sermon of Mr. Lloyd's upon the duty of bearing with resignation the mischances of life, is just come in time, I hope, to make us bear, like philosophers, the certainty of wet feet, and the probability of severe colds!"

I could say but little to cheer her; for recollecting, that no one at home knew where

we were, I foresaw not the smallest likelihood that the carriage would be sent for our conveyance back to Hazleford; nor were our thin shoes, and light summer garments at all calculated, if we walked, to preserve us from the mischiefs which she anticipated.

When the final benediction had been given, and the congregation arose from their knees, we turned to take leave of, and to thank Mrs. Dulverton, but she scarcely heard us, her whole attention being engrossed by the proceedings of the unknown elderly gentleman, who, on leaving his pew, walked straight towards the pulpit, from which Mr. Lloyd was just descending, and entered into conversation with him. We found nothing peculiarly interesting in the circumstance, and therefore, again saying "Good morning," began moving towards the door.

The farmers and labourers who had constituted the principal part of the assembly, paying little regard to weather, had flocked out, the instant it was decent to stir, and their wives, some with umbrellas and some with cloth cloaks, followed their example with scarcely less unconcern.—We, however,

not blessed with the same hardihood, paused in the porch; and surveyed the floating ground, and listened to the splashing rain-drops as they fell from the sloping roof upon the indented flag-stones, (worn into many a hollow, and now filled with water,)—with serious dismay. A carriage was in waiting, belonging, we justly concluded, to the stranger; and a footman, though provided with an umbrella, and great-coated up to the ears, shared our place of shelter.

A consultation now ensued, as to what would be the wisest plan for us to pursue. I proposed that, without further loss of time, we should despatch some little boy whom we could pay, to give notice at Hazleford, of our situation; and that, while obliged to wait for a carriage, we should either remain in the church, or venture through the rain, to the nearest cottage. Blanch was importunate for leave, to be herself our messenger. She was quite sure the rain would not hurt her;—she had been wet a hundred times, and had never suffered by it;—and it would be a great deal better to let *her* go, than to send a little

boy, who would not make half so much haste!——

Of course, these arguments were not listened to; but it really was becoming difficult to restrain her; and, as she leant upon my arm, I was forced to hold her hand tight in my own, to prevent her flying off. At this juncture, the elderly gentleman, having parted from Mr. Lloyd, came into the porch, and the footman, observing him, sprang forward to open the carriage door. We drew back, to leave room for him to pass, which he did with a most gracious bow; but without raising his head; a sudden gust of wind driving the rain towards his face, with a violence which made it unpleasant to look up, —He had scarcely proceeded three steps, when Blanch perceived that he had dropped his glove; and contriving to release her hand, she took it up, shook from it the wet gravel, and hastened after him to restore it. He turned on hearing her gentle voice as she presented it; and regarding her a moment,— uncovered his grey locks in defiance of rain and wind, received from her the glove with profound respect; and smiling with an ex-

pression that so much embellished his aged countenance as to give the by-standers no faint idea of what must once have been its beauty, said:

"Young lady, you do me too much honour! —I am ashamed to have been the cause of exposing you to this weather!"—Blanch, slightly curtseying, flew back to us, her colour heightened by the stranger's unexpected courtesy; and my mother, much amused by her self-incurred confusion, said, laughingly:

"I wish you had asked him, child, to take us all home, warm and dry! What could he have refused to so obliging a nymph?—But come—let us run over to that cottage on the opposite side of the way:—I am tired of standing in this damp, dirty, windy porch! and besides, here we can see no one to entrust with our message to Hazleford."

As I was fearful that these words would operate upon Blanch in such a manner as to renew her anxiety to set forward upon the embassy herself; I again secured her arm, and we left the porch to cross the road, and hasten with all the speed in our power towards the cottage, of which my mother had spoken. Ere we quite reached it, the

stranger's carriage, which had not preceded us far, suddenly stopped; the footman got down, and, after receiving some directions at the window, (from which, but a moment before, we had seen the owner looking out,) he immediately, to our great surprise, came running towards us, and, panting for breath, delivered the following message: "Sir Reginald Tourberville, ladies, desires his compliments, and begs to know if he can be of any use in taking you home."

My mother, without hesitation, answered: "Give Lady and Miss Stavordale's compliments to your master, Sir, and say that they will be happy to accept his obliging offer."

Whilst she was speaking, I could scarcely repress a smile on seeing Blanch, quietly and civilly, but yet as a thing of course, take the umbrella out of the footman's hand, and hold it over her grand-mother's head!—The man stared at first, exceedingly surprised, but recollecting himself, he submitted with a good grace, bowed, and hurried back to his master.

Our answer having been reported to the baronet, he gave instant orders that the carriage should turn to meet us; but the road was

much too narrow to admit of that measure: a circumstance which, when we drew near enough to hear him speak, he very politely lamented, at the same time that, with an excess of civility which really pained us, he hastily alighted to hand us into the vehicle.

We had been exposed to the rain too short a time, to entertain any serious apprehensions of suffering by it; and my mother, speedily reconciling herself to all that had passed, and recovering her accustomed vivacity, lost no time in accounting to our new acquaintance for the plight in which he had found us.

"It was evil counsel, Sir Reginald," she said, "that betrayed me into the perpetration of this young trick.—Evil communication, you know, they say, corrupts good manners: and so will evil advice sometimes corrupt good sense. Not content with undertaking, because the morning looked fair, to walk to my own church,—an achievement which, in this uncertain climate, I had no business, as a wise woman, to attempt—I suffered myself, having so far escaped the penalty I deserved, to be enticed into ram-

bling on a full mile and a half further, as if bent upon provoking the very ducking, which, but for your timely interposition, I must have received."—

"All circumstances considered," said I, "I think, Madam, you have little reason to complain. You enjoyed your walk almost as much as your young tempter; you have heard an excellent sermon, excellently delivered, and you have been compelled to 'bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,' only just long enough to heighten your satisfaction in being now safely secured from it."—

Sir Reginald here began apologizing for not having sooner offered his services. He said, that in hastily passing through the porch, he not given himself time to consider what could be our inducement for standing there; but that, after he was in the carriage, and saw us, on looking back, encountering, without any means of defence, all the discomforts of wind, rain and dirt, it struck him, that he had been guilty of unpardonable remissness in not having at once comprehended, that our outstaying the congregation in so disagreeable a situation, must have been a matter of

necessity, that called for his immediate interference.

"That would have spoiled all," cried my mother, "I know myself well enough to be aware, that, had I been exempt from one atom of the fright resulting from this morning's exploit, there is no telling how soon I might have yielded to temptation again. These young adventurers," looking at Blanch, "so speedily forget passed difficulties, or are so ready to combat them anew, that they are dangerous spirits for their sober elders to associate with, and too often gain such influence, that we require, in order to resist them, *feeling proofs* of the folly of having ever listened to their persuasions."

The presence of the Baronet alone withheld Blanch from entering, as her countenance proclaimed that she was prepared to do, into a playful and animated defence of herself. But, silent as she was, the old gentleman could scarcely for a moment withdraw his eyes from her: she seemed absolutely to fascinate him; and I, recollecting the reputation of former immorality which Philippa had once told us that she had

heard attributed to him, began to fear that our polite Baronet had not, even yet, so wholly overcome the evil characteristics of his youth, as to have quite divested himself of all proneness to undue gallantry. But, I believe, — I hope at least, I wronged him. There was much old-fashioned devotedness in his behaviour towards her, and, at all possible opportunities, sundry very flattering things were spoken either *of* or *to* her; — yet, I saw none of those amorous ogles which appear to seek and to expect reciprocation; his admiration, though expressive, sought no concealment; he watched for no favourable moment to speak to her unheard by her friends; and, to say all in one word, if the poor old man's heart *is* touched, his passion, I am convinced, amounts to nothing beyond an unlucky infatuation in regard to beauty, which travels through life with some individuals, " nor quits them till they die."

Whether from motives of civility to my father, or from the desire of extending a little further the gratification of seeing the fair object of his homage, the Baronet, when we reached Hazleford, accompanied us into the

house, anxious, he said, to seize so favourable an opportunity of returning Sir Geoffry's visit. Our long absence had given the family much anxiety; particularly as the carriage had been despatched for us to Hazleford church as soon as the storm began, and had not only returned empty, but without bringing back any tidings which could lead to the discovery of what had become of us. We now related our little adventure; and my father was profuse in his acknowledgments to his brother Baronet for the care which he had taken of us. Philippa, meanwhile, whose prejudice against the old gentleman had been so strong, was all amazement at the disposition to be social which he manifested. She had prepared herself to find him haughty and reserved; and, on the contrary, she saw that his manners were perfectly well-bred, though a little antiquated; that he possessed a ready talent of paying agreeable compliments, and that,—his age considered,—his face and figure were uncommonly handsome! All this was so unlike what she had taught herself to expect, that she could scarcely give credit to her own senses; and when, after a visit

of considerable duration, he left the house, she half angrily exclaimed: "How this vile neighbourhood loves detraction!—Is *that* the Sir Reginald Tourberville I have so often heard accused of pride, sternness, and I know not what other abominable ill-qualities? Why the people must be mad? I never saw a more amiable, courteous, delightful old man!"

"My dear child," said my mother, "the *people* are not mad: but I will tell you *who* has a little touch of one of the attributes of madness — temerity of judgment — and that is your fair self! There is not one atom more wisdom in lavishing such profuse encomiums upon Sir Reginald, at the end of half an hour's acquaintance, than there was in previously giving credit to, and in exaggerating to yourself the idle rumours of a misinformed, envious, or perhaps, disappointed set of country gossips! Let poor old Sir Reginald alone. Time will shew what he really is; and time ought really, ere now, to have shewn you the error of forming such rash decisions! When will you learn, my dear Philippa, that, between

the two classes into which, alone, you seem willing to divide the human race — angels and devils — there is an intermediate order, and by much the most numerous one, composed of beings neither all devil nor all angel? but like you and me, and two thirds of our species, made up of a little of both, mingled with a very copious proportion of human folly, short-sightedness, and presumption."

Philippa submitted to this lecture with more humility than I almost ever knew her display. The Baronet's deportment during his visit — in despite of my mother's qualifying observations — had so agreeably surprised her, and awakened hopes so sanguine of future gaiety at East Vale, that no common trial seemed to have power to derange the happy complacency of her humour. She said, however, but little more on the subject; leaving it to my father to enquire how we liked Mr. Loyd's preaching; what sort of congregation had been assembled; and what was the inducement of Sir Reginald to go to Storriton Church, in preference to attending the service in his own parish.

"He went to Storriton, my dear," replied my mother, "that he might not have to obtain by deputy the very information which you have now demanded, respecting Mr. Lloyd's preaching: he went, in short, to form his own opinion of him by auricular testimony;—and a very good way, too, Philippa, of judging of a *sermon*, though not quite so safe a one of judging, in the same space of time—of a character!"

Blanch, who, from the day that she arrived here, has had the misery hanging over her head, of parting with the faithful friend and attendant who accompanied her from abroad, is now relieved from that apprehension, and as blithe as a bird.—My mother's maid, who is also housekeeper, has had a violent quarrel with the old butler; and as she found it impossible, notwithstanding all her complaints, to effect his *dismission*, has given in her own *resignation*; and Clavering, Blanch's favourite, is to succeed her.—

If intelligence, activity, and an earnest desire to please her employers are qualifications to suit her for the place, she possesses them all in the highest degree. But were she even deficient in some of the requisites that constitute an able housekeeper, the pleasure of witnessing the happiness of Blanch, as well as her own, in consequence of this arrangement, would more than recompense us for her failures.

Our visit to Bovil Court has been returned; and, in addition to Mr. Tremayne, who escorted his mother on horseback, she was accompanied by her niece, Miss Tourberville, who had only arrived the evening before. She is a pretty, delicate, fair girl, apparently very timid, very mild, and rather helpless. In speaking, her voice is pitched so high, that it sounds thin, and almost squeaking; but, luckily, it is not loud, and therefore gives the less annoyance to the ear.—Some people would call it a soft voice, I believe; but I call nothing so, that is not

more round, full-toned, and musical. I hate, as Philippa says, "a talking flageolet."

Blanch was not in the room when Lady Earlsford entered, but at her Ladyship's request, she was sent for, in order to be introduced to Miss Tourberville. Martha was deputed to go in search of her; and whether from ill-humour at having any trouble to take, or from mere thoughtlessness, she never told her that there was company in the house, but suffered her to make her appearance in such a plight, that our exclamations almost drove her back again! She had been gardening in a patch of ground which my father has lately given up to her; and now came in from that employment, with clothes stained by the drippings of the watering pot, shoes soiled by the mould, and hair escaping, in every direction, from the comb intended to confine it!—Philippa and I, on beholding her, actually began scolding; my Father suggested, that another time it would be well to put on a bonnet and apron; my mother recommended her having immediate recourse to a scrubbing-brush

and tub! and the poor girl, scarcely knowing what excuse to stammer forth, crept back towards the door, with an intention of going up stairs to adjust the disordered *toilette*, against which we had so fearfully cried out. But Lady Earlsford, rising with the utmost kindness, hastily approached her, saying: "I entreat you not to run away, Miss Blanch!—Your appearance has nothing in it, I assure you, that can shock a real lover of gardening—such as I am myself; and in proof of this, you have but to come to Bovil Court any morning, between the hours of eleven and twelve, and you will find me, not only engaged in your own pursuit, but wearing precisely the same livery."

This good-humoured speech restored composure to us all; Blanch ventured to look up, and smiled her thanks; we discontinued our remonstrances; and Lady Earlsford proceeded to the introduction of the two young people. They found not much to say to each other, it must be allowed; but, surrounded by so many observers, *that* was not

to be wondered at. They looked, however, as if, at their next interview, they would become better companions; and meanwhile, Miss Tourberville took every opportunity of stealing a fuller knowledge of her neighbour's features, by cautious side-glances; whilst Blanch openly permitted herself the same indulgence, and testified, by her pleased looks, how well she was disposed to cultivate the acquaintance.

Mr. Tremayne, during part of the visit, placed himself next to me, and talked very pleasantly on a variety of subjects; drawing amongst the rest (I had materials for that employment before me); discussing with great ability, the different merits of different styles, and enquiring, at the same time, whether I ever took likenesses. I acknowledged that sometimes I did. "Why then," cried he, with animation, "you should make a study of your young niece! I never saw a finer model to draw from. She has the highest, the most refined style of beauty it is possible to imagine!"

With an affectation of modesty, which I just then, scarcely knowing why, thought it

proper to assume, I answered: "Yes,—we all think her a very pretty girl."

"Pretty!" repeated he, almost indignantly, "How you underrate her!—Is it possible to look at that face and call it merely pretty?—It is classical!—it is poetical!—it is the living representation of the *beau ideal* of antient Greece!"

"But in this country," said I, wishing still to draw him on, "and in these days, the sort of beauty which you attribute to her, is not very generally valued.—The regularity of Blanch's features would, by many persons, be called formal and stiff. She would be said to resemble a statue dressed up in modern attire; and a thousand girls, possessing only fine complexions, lively eyes, and dimpled cheeks, will be thought far more attractive."

He smiled; and looking hard at me, said, "Do you really believe what you assert?—Have you not had proof that both amongst the *connoisseurs* in beauty—such as Mr. Westcroft and my uncle—and amongst the less cultivated in taste, such as Mrs. Crosby, the pre-eminence of your niece has been equally

admitted? Mrs. Crosby, indeed, calls her *pretty*, and derogatory to her claims as that word appears to me, when *you* apply it to her, I listen to it with patience from Mrs. Crosby, because it is the term which conveys the pleasantest ideas to her own mind. When she speaks of a beautiful object, she means something which neither you nor I should think worth a glance; she means something convenient or substantial, or remarkably good of its kind. I have heard her call a new pig-sty,—a strong clumsy cart-horse,—and even a large Cheshire cheese beautiful! I, therefore, never can wish to hear her call a young lady any thing more than pretty. But you, Miss Stavordale, know the value of words: I will, therefore, neither allow you to say that your niece is *pretty*, nor that she is *formal*, nor that she is a mere *statue* dressed up. You must be aware, as well as every body who looks at her, that the perfection of her features deducts in no degree from their expression: she has the accurate proportions which may be given to marble, but nothing of its cold,

lifeless immobility! There is as much sense, animation, and feeling in her countenance, as there is grace and elegance in her form!"

After a panegyric such as this, I thought it time to rest content; and led the conversation to other topics. I told him how much we had approved of Mr. Lloyd's manner of officiating last Sunday; and said, that my father hoped soon to see him, as he had left a card for him when we called at Bovil-Court.

"Lloyd knows that sir Geoffry did him that honour," cried Mr. Tremayne, "and he would have had great pleasure in accompanying us here this morning; but my uncle sent for him upon business just as we were setting out; and therefore, I imagine, his visit must be deferred till to-morrow."

We then talked of the neighbourhood; and Philippa, who came and joined us, spoke in high terms of her friend, Mrs. Talbot; but gave of several others,—perhaps not much inferior to that lady—so satirical and ridiculous an account, that I shook my head at her, though in vain, and two or

three times, just *as* vainly, sought to turn the conversation; but Mr. Tremayne laughed, and seemed entertained; and poor Philippa, seduced by the belief that she was recommending herself to him by her wit, prosecuted her unmerciful strictures till the termination of the visit. I am persuaded, in defiance of his laughter, that he thought her too severe; for I saw him occasionally arch his brow, and look at her with an air of astonishment, by no means expressive of unqualified admiration.—But of course his gallantry would not permit him to avow his sentiments; and Philippa is not yet aware, that a laugh may as often cover censure as accompany applause.

When the *trio* departed, she became very anxious to know what had been the subject of the long parley which I had held with Mr. Tremayne, before she joined us. I evaded giving her any direct answer; fully sensible how little the information which I could have communicated, would have tended either to increase her love for Blanch, or to convey pleasurable sensations to her

own bosom.—Philippa's is not precisely the temper which can hear praise of another 'with unwounded ear.'

I spent the whole evening yesterday, alone with Blanch, the rest of the family dining at Mrs. Talbot's, from which engagement I gladly excused myself on the plea of leaving room in the carriage for our friend Mrs. Paulet, who so much desired to go, and who had no other means of conveyance. My mother saw that I had a sincere wish to remain at home, and did not press the matter: but Martha, for a few minutes, looked terribly frightened lest *she* should be condemned to stay behind instead of me.

My young companion and I were at no loss to find subjects of conversation almost equally interesting to us both. I asked her many questions respecting her former modes of life; her mother's family, and her mother's habits and disposition. She answered me with the utmost frankness; appearing

delighted at the opportunity of dwelling upon the remembrance of passed times; and still more, at that of expatiating upon the goodness and affection of the parent whose loss she still so feelingly laments. Of her father she said but little; he does not seem to have made so warm an impression upon her heart as I could wish: yet, she taxed him with no unkindness; on the contrary, she asserts that he loved her mother tenderly; and that he was always as indulgent to herself as she had any right to desire. Still, however, there must be something wanting, or a young creature capable of attachment so grateful, would not have been so differently affected towards her two parents.—On my expressing some surprise, mingled with satisfaction, at her having, in a Catholic country and with a Catholic mother, been reared a Protestant, she explained the circumstance, by saying, "that far from having always lived amongst Catholics, she had spent full as great a portion of time at Lausanne as in Italy."

"We did not," added she, "go to Florence till I was nearly thirteen years old;

and, up to that period, though Mamma attended to all the other parts of my education, she committed the care of my religious instruction to a Protestant minister, a kind and excellent old man, who regularly came to our house once or twice every week, for the purpose of reading with me, and of explaining the principles of his own faith."

"Was this method pursued at the desire of your father?"

"My father did not appear to concern himself much about the matter; but still, I believe, that mamma was acting in conformity with his wishes. Though sincerely attached to her own religion, she was no bigot; and often said, that nothing would make her more truly wretched, than the belief that a good Protestant was less secure of mercy in another world, than a good Catholic. So, whilst Clavering and I went every Sunday to hear divine service performed by my good old Lutheran minister at the parish church, mamma and her father, who resided with us, and who, in the last years of his life was blind, used to creep, arm in arm, to some Catholic chapel to attend Mass."

"What was your grandfather's situation in life?"

"I do not know whether I ought to tell you," replied she, smiling.

"And why not."

"Because, since my arrival here in England, I have several times heard my mother spoken of as a woman of family; and that report must have proceeded from my father. But the fact, dear aunt, is, that she was the daughter of an Italian artist. Grandpapa had been a very eminent painter; he had resided in various countries; and wherever he went had always taken her with him, till she married. By that means, she had acquired a much higher degree of information than is usual amongst young persons of her class in Italy. She had mixed with individuals of all countries and of all ranks; and, whatever was to be learned in any of the places she visited, her father was anxious that she should be taught. I therefore can give you no idea, either of the grace and elegance of her manners, or of the extraordinary diversity of her accomplishments. She was, besides, though *I* never knew her till her health and spirits

were much impaired, the most beautiful creature the world ever looked upon. As far back as I can remember any thing, I have a clear recollection of seeing her gazed after, whenever we walked out; and of hearing expressions of admiration involuntarily uttered, as she passed. But she was often melancholy, though never out of humour. When grandpapa became blind, she prevailed upon my father to let him come and live under the same roof with us. Before that, he had lodged and boarded in another house. Poor old man! he was often very petulant and fractious. The loss of his sight, and the consciousness of having been so bad a manager of his affairs, that now, in his age, he was obliged to subsist on the bounty of his daughter and her husband, at intervals, almost drive him to insanity. It was sweet to hear my mother trying to sooth and cheer him. I have often stood by and cried whilst she has been telling him, that his presence in her house would bring a blessing upon all its inhabitants; that, the more he required her care, the more joy she had in bestowing it, and the more dear to her he became; and

that she was bringing up her little Bianca (as they used to call me) to watch over him, to reverence, and to love him, as tenderly as she did herself. These assurances seldom failed, for a time, to console and revive him: and, though he shook his white head and sighed, a half smile accompanied that sigh; and a kiss imprinted by the mother and child upon his venerable forehead, completed his temporary restoration to tranquillity."

"And how, my dear Blanch," said I, much interested by these details, "how did your father behave towards the afflicted old man?"

"Very kindly, indeed. He loved to converse with him; to make him relate anecdotes of the remarkable persons he had known; to hear his reflections upon the progress of the arts in the several parts of Europe which he had visited; and, in short, to *draw him out* upon such themes as, at once, he was most competent to talk of, and my father most entertained in listening to."

"Of course, he accompanied you to Florence?"

"We removed thither entirely on his ac-

count. He was a native of that city, and, notwithstanding his blindness, felt a passionate desire, once more to revisit his dear birthplace; and, if any of them still survived, to greet his former friends. My mother thought, that a change from the keen air of Switzerland to the milder climate of Italy, might be of benefit to his general health, which was beginning to decline: and my father, never reluctant to try any thing new, was the most active in preparing for the journey. We accordingly set forward on our pilgrimage; a painful one to me, whatever it might be to the rest of the party. I loved the people and their manners, and the country they were conveying me from; and the regret which I experienced seemed to be participated by so many of the kind friends I left, that the separation almost broke my heart. However, our enterprise prospered even beyond our hopes. My grandfather lived two years after his return to Florence; and not only his health, but his spirits improved. A few, a very few of his early associates were still in existence. They gathered round him; they cordially welcomed his arrival; they

talked with him of passed events, or amused him by the description of recent changes; and thus encircled, sitting, evening after evening, in the open air, enjoying the mild temperature of his '*diletto paese*,' he gently expired, with his hand fast locked in my mother's, and a look of contentment and serenity impressed upon his countenance."

"And that sweet mother herself, my poor Blanch, how long did she survive him?"

Tears rushed to her eyes, and poured in large drops down her pale cheek, as, with quivering lips, the dear girl faintly answered, "I lost her six months after he died!" Then rising, and covering her face with her handkerchief, she went hastily out of the room.

I was provoked with myself for having, by so direct a question, caused a renewal of the grief which it was natural to suppose the death of such a mother must have produced.

The little history to which I had been listening, so simply and unaffectedly told, had increased my love for the young narrator; and, though too experienced in the usual effects of officious and undesired consolation upon genuine sorrow, to have any intention

of pursuing her, I yet most sincerely regretted her absence: and felt the void which my own inadvertency had occasioned.

But she returned to me sooner than I expected; sooner, at least, than I deserved; and returned with so composed an aspect, that had not her eyes still looked red, scarcely a trace of her recent agitation could have been detected. I took especial care to say nothing that should again revive melancholy ideas; and by degrees I brought her back to a tone of cheerfulness.

But we talked no more of Italy.

Yesterday, the whole family from Bovil-Court, with Sir Reginald Tourberville, Mr. Westcroft, Mrs. Talbot, and two or three others, dined here. In the morning, while Philippa was looking over her collection of music, and selecting such compositions as, if asked, she should best like to play or sing, my mother, making some pretence for sending Blanch out of the room, said, as soon as she was gone, "I have a little hint to give

you, Philippa, with respect to the musical part of our entertainment this evening, to which I beg that you will attend. Let there be none of the good-natured excuses devised for Blanch, should she be required to perform, with which you so kindly furnished her at Mrs. Crosby's. And further; if you chuse to call upon her to sing duets, remember, that I positively interdict her being condemned to sing merely the second parts."

Philippa, too angry to suppress the expression of her feelings, answered with much asperity, "It is plain, madam, that, in every circumstance, the part which *you* intend for her is that of principal! I submit, however; and, far from aiming at any competition with her, shall humbly hold back from even presuming to perform at all."

She then replaced the music-books in their stand, tied on her bonnet, and went out to walk in the garden.

When the door was closed: "I know not," said my mother, laughing, "whether she may not, in some degree, be right. There *was* a time when I was ambitious as a mother; but on *that* score I have seen the folly of

my ways; and so now, I believe, I am becoming ambitious as a grandmother!—The fact is, my dear Anne, that I am amazingly tired of going about with you and your sisters, like a superannuated Venus and her three neglected Graces. You remind me of the last survivors at a game of Commerce. One, —that is yourself, has, I am afraid, lost her sole remaining chance by apathy and inexpertness;—Philippa will lose hers by over-*finessing*;—and Martha may as well throw up her hand without playing at all; for the cards which she holds bode nothing but inevitable failure. Now, my little Blanch, who *cut in* at the table later than any of you, and still retains her *three lives* entire, has been so favoured by the dealer, that she can hardly miss the pool, unless tricked out of it by some juggling competitor. It shall be *my* province to protect her from such knavery; and, therefore, I advise Philippa to beware how she ventures upon any mal-practices, intended to counteract the fair progress of the game."

"And pray, madam," said I, laughing at this figurative language, "what may be the

value of the pool to be contended for? You know I ask very disinterestedly; for, as my own *three lives* are gone, I am, of course, proclaimed *dead*, and have no longer any stake depending."

"Nay, nay, who knows? The stake which was once set before you, may, perhaps, be again placed within your reach; and, with better skill, and more experience, you may now have a greater chance of securing it, that when you first faintly struggled for its possession.—But, to have done with all this foolish metaphor, my desire is, that Blanch should not be enviously and unjustly prevented from modestly availing herself of the powers to please with which both by nature and education she has been so liberally furnished. I have no fixed views for her at the present moment. Mr. Westcroft admires her rapturously; but I do not look upon him as a *marrying man*; nor, if the case were otherwise, do I think that, at nearly forty, he would make a very eligible husband for a girl of sixteen. Mr. Tremayne's fine dark eyes express very flattering things when they wander towards her, and they

are not unapt to take such little excursive flights; but his lips have scarcely yet addressed three words to her; and I can found no hypothesis upon the mere testimony of a man's looks. His uncle—Ay, Anne, I know what that curve of your lip means!—his uncle appeared bewitched by her; but, whatever may be the wickedness for which you are preparing to give me credit, I pray you, do not extend your evil thoughts so far as to believe, for one single half moment, that I could ever meditate the wish of sacrificing her to *him*.—Nor, to say the truth, do I think that we are justified in so gratuitously ascribing to the poor old Baronet the desperate folly of entertaining the remotest idea of such a connexion. It is making him pay very dear for a few admiring glances! No, no;—I neither want to dispose of her immediately to an antiquated courtier, to a sworn *celibataire*, nor to a silent, though young and handsome observer. I merely wish her to keep up the favourable impression which she may have made upon all these people, leaving the rest to time and fate."

Our dinner party had not much to distin-

guish it from other parties of a similar description. Every body was punctual; every body was well-dressed; the principal dishes were praised by the principal guests; and my mother, as she rarely fails to do, acquitted herself with ease, politeness, and vivacity, at the head of her table. Sir Reginald Tourberville, in the course of the day, gave proof of stronger abilities, and of brighter conversational talents than I had been inclined to allow him credit for; but, at the same time that my respect for his mental powers increased, my opinion of the warmth of his family affection diminished. His behaviour to his sister was reserved and distant;—to his poor little niece, it was cold as an icicle;—he treated lord Earlsford with somewhat more complacency;—but to his favourite, Horace (Mr. Tremayne) was all cordiality, frankness, and good-humour. I was particularly pleased, however, at the kind and brotherly attention with which, as if to make amends for her grandfather's depressing neglect, Mr. Tremayne treated his unobtrusive young kinswoman. He talked to her more than to any one else at table; but in an under voice,

calculated to draw as little notice upon her as possible; for he could not but be aware that she was too much frightened to be able to converse in an audible tone, with the smallest degree of cheerfulness, or, indeed, without constraint.

Towards Blanch the old gentleman was as gracious as ever: there was even, at times, a species of sportiveness in his manner of addressing her, which became him much better than the frigid austerity with which he regarded, and occasionally spoke to lady Earlsford. 'A smile improves his countenance so wonderfully, that when he changes from grave to gay, I can scarcely persuade myself that I am looking at the same man!'

I long to have some conversation with Mr. Westcroft upon the subject of this, to me, unintelligible want of concord between the brother and sister. In whatever it may originate, nothing could be plainer, than that it is not a circumstance which causes lady Earlsford any embarrassment, though it may, very probably, internally vex her. She chatted with Mr. Westcroft and my mother, during the whole repast without appearing conscious of Sir

Reginald's forbidding demeanour; and, from time to time, I saw her eyes sparkle with pleasure at the perseverance with which her son continued his assiduities towards Miss Tourberville. Mr. Lloyd, who was also of this party, was scarcely less attentive to the young lady; and thus supported, she sat at table with tolerable comfort.

In the drawing-room, though, of course, not the slightest allusion was made to the temper, good or bad, of any of the company during dinner, lady Earlsford's spirits obviously flagged. She took no share in the general conversation; but, placing herself on a sofa apart from us all, called Miss Tourberville to sit beside her; spoke to her, at intervals, in a low voice; kept constant hold of one of her hands; kissed her repeatedly; and regarded her, 'ever and anon,' with looks of the most ineffable tenderness.

As ours is not a family in which these sentimental demonstrations are very customary, we beheld them with some surprise; and Martha, in particular, stood at a little distance, staring open-mouthed at the scene, with so cold and fixed a sneer upon her face,

that my mother, to call off her attention, sent her into the library, to look for a number of 'The Botanical Magazine,' which she wanted to shew to Mrs. Talbot. Luckily, before she came back, lady Earlsford and Miss Tourberville had risen, and joined the group round the table, who were examining a beautiful set of engraved and coloured exotic plants; and, as nothing further passed to furnish aliment to Martha's curiosity, she strolled away, and we were relieved from the trouble of providing expedients to ward off the detection of her unguarded ill-breeding.

Lady Earlsford shewed, in the course of the evening, that she had not renounced the wish she had professed, of encouraging an intimacy between Miss Tourberville and Blanch. She asked my mother to let the latter spend the ensuing day at Bovil Court; a request which was readily granted; and then, to help forward the acquaintance, recommended to them both, as the evening was fine, a walk together in the garden. During their ramble, the two girls, unprovided with more interesting subjects of conversation, questioned each other as to the extent of their

respective accomplishments. Miss Tourberville, on being asked whether she was musical, answered: "Yes, a little; but I wish I had never learned."

"And why?" inquired Blanch.

"Oh! because I am always so dreadfully frightened if I am called upon to play in company; and it is ten times worse if I am asked to sing: I lose every note in my voice, and tremble as if I had an ague fit! Yesterday we dined at Eastvale, and my aunt *would* make me attempt to sing before grandpapa! She meant it kindly; but oh! how you would have pitied me had you been there! I am always in a panic when grandpapa is present; and the idea of having to *sing* to him, almost scared me out of my senses! I could neither see the music-book, nor guide my fingers, nor command my voice. And so, after making two or three feeble and fruitless efforts to get on, I lost all self-possession, and burst into tears!"

Blanch expressed much compassion for her; but could not forbear saying, that she was surprised at her being so extremely

alarmed when performing only to her own relations.

"Oh, but grandpapa," resumed Miss Tourberville, "is not like a relation one lives with. I see him so rarely, that I stand quite as much in awe of him as of an entire stranger. And, besides, I have always heard that he is so nice a judge of music, and so difficult to please, that I am sure it is quite impossible that he can ever like such singing as mine. I have, at best, but a very indifferent voice; and, when I am the least in the world fluttered, I might as well have none at all. Have *you* these terrible tremors, Miss Blanch?"

"No," replied her companion. "I have lived so long in a country, where almost every body is more or less musical, and was so early accustomed to take a part whenever I was wanted, that I have not any fears of the nature which you describe."

"Then, I am sure you are an enviable creature!—But my aunt has promised never again to ask me to perform when grandpapa is in the room; and so, I hope that nobody else will propose to me to play this evening."

Blanch undertook to speak to me, or to my mother as soon as she returned to the drawing-room, in order to preserve her new friend from any application upon so irksome a subject. She kept her word; and related the above dialogue to us the moment that she had it in her power. We desired her to assure Miss Tourberville, that she had nothing to apprehend from our importunities; and the word music, it was resolved, should not be pronounced the whole evening.

But, as something must be done when you have guests, under the notion of amusing them, we ordered card-tables as soon as tea was over; and, dividing our forces into two bands, of very unequal proportion it must be allowed, we appointed one (the senior band) to play a solemn game of whist; and led off the other (the younger and more numerous party) to scramble for fame and fishes at Loo. This same juvenile Loo-detachment soon became animated, and somewhat noisy. Even Miss Tourberville, having no longer the fear of her grandfather before her eyes, from the circumstance of being seated with her back

to the whist table, so far emancipated herself, as now and then to indulge in an audible laugh, and at other times, to venture an eager, but perfectly good-humoured expostulation with Messrs. Westcroft and Tremayne, upon the unfairness of some of their practices. The effect which her thin, high voice, thus exalted, had upon the sensitive organs of Sir Reginald was truly singular. Every little shrill exclamation made him *wince*;—her laugh, poor girl! seemed to set his teeth on edge; and in short, it was evident throughout the whole rubber, that, in proportion as her hilarity increased, his comfort and complacency diminished. Once, between the deals, he said, loud enough for all but the offending party to hear him: "I cannot but observe, that a round game gives admirable opportunity to persons who have discordant voices, of excoriating the ears of those around them! There are notes even in the human scale, that surprisingly resemble the first vocal attempts of a young peacock!"

My dear father, who, if left to himself, always enjoys the sound of mirth, whether musical or the reverse, now thought it pro-

per, however, to call the Loo-party to order. All but poor Miss Tourberville, who had not heard her grandfather's severe speech, understood the warning, and moderated their tone: but she, in the simplicity of her heart, declaring, that Sir Geoffry, she was sure, was too good-natured to be really made angry, renewed, at intervals, her little acute screams, and thereby threw every muscle in the old gentleman's face, and probably every sinew in his frame, into fresh agitation.

Lady Earlsford seemed in misery while all this was passing. She admonished her son not to disturb the quiet course of the game by doing any thing unfair: he promised obedience; and became, as well as Mr. Westcroft, and all the other lively players, as silent and grave as the party at the whist table. The effect of this was, that, whereas the voice of Miss Tourberville had before been sometimes drowned in that of her neighbours, it was now heard singly and unsupported; and, of course, heard to greater disadvantage than ever. Luckily, at last, Blanch, who was seated between Mr. Lloyd and myself, dropped some of her fishes: whilst we

were assisting her to find them, by pushing back our chairs and holding candles to light the floor, Mr. Tremayne hastened round to us, descried, and seized upon them all in an instant, and, having restored them to their owner, sent Mr. Lloyd to occupy the place which he had just quitted; and contrived, when we re-seated ourselves, to take his station between Blanch and me. From that movement, he discarded the taciturnity which he had so lately assumed, and began talking with all the gaiety and ease of a man secure of impunity. Blanch, who, from not very perfectly understanding the game, and consequently deriving but little amusement from it, had hitherto been remarkably still, soon became, incited by his example, as lively and chatty as himself. *Her* spontaneous laugh was now also heard; but it produced none of the uneasy sensations in Sir Reginald, which that of her less fortunate predecessor had occasioned: on the contrary, he turned his head from time to time, and looked at her, even when least upon her guard, with obvious pleasure; and all allusions to young peacocks were, from that period, at an end.

The change was not lost upon my mother, who, catching my eye, smiled most significantly; neither was the defection of Mr. Tremayne, who had, till then, sat between Miss Tourberville and Philippa, lost upon the latter. The glances which she afterwards directed towards Blanch, were by no means improved in sweetness by the circumstance: but Blanch was too merry to observe them; and the game went on as harmoniously as if Philippa had been in the best humour imaginable.

The whist party broke up first; and Sir Reginald, as soon as he was emancipated, walked up to our table, and stood at the back of Blanch's chair. The sight of him, stationed immediately opposite to her, as effectually silenced his grand-daughter, as if her lips had been hermetically sealed. Not so either Mr. Tremayne or Blanch: they pursued their pretended contests about their fish, and accused each other, and defended their own integrity, with as much spirit as ever:—Nay, sometimes they even referred their differences to the old gentleman himself, who, entering into the humour of the

appeal, affected great impartiality in arbitrating between them, but invariably gave his decision in favour of Blanch. She enjoyed these triumphs with true girlish glee; and exulted over her defeated antagonist with unmerciful rigour. Yet, even when most animated and eager, there was no abruptness in her manner,—nothing that exceeded the bounds of graceful and allowable vivacity:—and, with all her wrangling, she rose up, at last, a loser, finding no consolation but in observing, that Mr. Tremayne, "avaricious as he was," left the table a greater sufferer than herself.

The quarter of an hour that elapsed after the Loo players dispersed, was spent by Sir Reginald in talking with Blanch about Italy and Switzerland. He converses fluently in the language of the former country, and kept up with her, for some time, a lively dialogue in what appeared to me the purest and best pronounced *Lingua Toscana* I have almost ever heard. Mr. Tremayne stood beside them, and seemed to take an animated interest in what was passing; but he did not often join in the conversation, though, from

the few words which I heard him utter, I am well convinced of his ability to have done so with credit. The truth is, that he obviously derived more pleasure from hearing, and gazing at Blanch, than he could experience by becoming an object of attention himself. His eyes never wandered from her face, his ear lost not an accent that fell from her lips; and I am persuaded that, were he asked, and put upon his honour to answer with sincerity, he could describe with minuteness every movement, and interpret with accuracy almost every look of this unconscious fascinator during the whole time he remained at her side.

Lady Earlsford's carriage was announced before her brother's, and Blanch then forsook her aged beau to take leave of Miss Tourberville, and to enquire at what hour the next day her appearance at Bovil-court would be expected.

"Oh, come as early as you can," answered her new friend—"You are to garden with my aunt, you know, and to walk with me, and to gather strawberries, and to do a hundred things which will require a long day.—And pray," added she, "bring some music with

you; I am dying to hear you play and sing."——

"What a strange complaint," said Blanch, laughing, "to be reduced to such extremity by!" But take courage;—for I will do all I can to-morrow, to effect your recovery."

Mr. Tremayne, who was hovering near them during this parley, now said to his cousin, laying peculiar emphasis on the last word. "Is Miss Blanch to be your guest to-morrow?"

"Yes," answered she, not appearing to understand him, "we have Lady Stavordale's promise to let her come."

He looked very little pleased, but said no more; and it immediately struck me, that his mother had selected (whether designedly or not is uncertain) a day for inviting Blanch on which he is to be absent from home. Be that as it may, the young visitor departed this morning very contentedly, to fulfil her engagement; and, much to my satisfaction, here comes Mr. Westcroft to ask how we do, and talk over the dinner party of yesterday.

I was very glad when I went down to Mr. Westcroft yesterday, to find that there was no one with him but my mother; and still more glad, that, from an impulse of curiosity corresponding with my own, she seemed determined to procure from him precisely the very information which I had intended (though with more circumlocution,) to apply for. She began by saying:

"My dear Mr. Westcroft, you who are so well acquainted with the two simpletons who were here yesterday,—Lady Earlsford and her brother, must give me some clue by which to understand whence such 'dire offence,' and 'mighty contests' have arisen between them. What ails them?—And above all, what can possess people of the world, as they are, to pay so little regard to appearances, as to carry their ill-will legibly impressed upon their faces, into society?"

"They would tell you," replied Mr. Westcroft," that no contests *have* arisen between them, since the fact is, that they have never exhaled their discontent, in words."

"I wish then," resumed my mother, "that before I have again the honour of be-

ing in their company, they would, according to the old saying, *shoot their bolt*, and come forth with clear bosoms. Nothing so bad as hoarding up silent dudgeon."

"True; but the incitement to this dudgeon is of a nature which neither party likes to discuss. Sir Reginald, the most opposite to an enthusiast (except in the cause of ancestry or beauty) of any man existing, is displeased, not to say disgusted, by the extravagant fondness of lady Earlsford for her insipid little niece. He disliked the poor girl's mother, whose romantic turn of character, nearly akin to that of his sister, contributed, he thinks, in no small degree, to the ruin of Charles Tourberville, his son. To explain what I am saying, I must inform you, that the lady with whom Charles eloped, was a young married woman, for whom his wife, almost at first sight, contracted a most vehement predilection, and whom she invited to her house, and elected into a confidential friend a very few weeks after the acquaintance commenced. Sir Reginald soon saw indications of danger from the intimacy, and admonished his daughter-in-law to beware

of what she was doing. Her new associate, he averred, was carrying on a deliberate plan for the seduction of her husband; and nothing would so effectually further that plan, as the imprudent familiarity of intercourse to which she was affording countenance and facility. Mrs. Tourberville slighted these sagacious warnings; — nay, she did worse; for, in conjunction with lady Earlsford, as infatuated as herself, she enraged the old Baronet by a warm defence of the spotless purity of her *injured friend*, and redoubled every testimony of sentimental attachment to her, as if on purpose to irritate and defy him. The artful woman took advantage of the opportunity thus given her, to secure more and more firmly the influence which she had acquired over Charles, and the fatal step of which you are aware, ensued."

"Thus far," said my mother, "you have made clear to us, Mr. Westcroft, the origin of Sir Reginald's prejudice against Jane's mother, and the motive of his still-lurking resentment against lady Earlsford: but how have you accounted for the unnatural antipathy which he manifestly entertains against

the poor, harmless girl herself? Let him, if he will, execrate her foolish mother, and condemn without remorse, her wrong-headed aunt: but why loathe his unoffending grandchild?

"Why, but because, having all his life been a man of arbitrary habits, and inflexible temper, it is his pleasure to visit upon the daughter the sins of her parents. She is like her mother in person: *that*, with him, is an argument for believing that she will resemble her in the flimsy softness of her character, nurtured, as he prognosticates that softness will be, into something bordering upon imbecility by her aunt. Then, he has *another* cause of quarrel with her, which you will allow to be most rational and just:—she is not a boy!—now, though one might be apt to think, that he had had enough of boys in the persons of his two graceless sons, yet is his pride most deeply wounded by reflecting that, in consequence of Jane Tourberville's impertinence in being a girl, the title, at her father's death, must pass out of the direct line, and devolve to a collateral branch."

"But why need that disturb him? The probability is, that it will eventually belong to his favourite nephew, Mr. Tremayne. And to whom could he sooner wish it to descend?"

"To no one, *personally* considered: but, my dear lady Stavordale, you do not properly estimate the untowardness of having an heir presumptive whose name is not *Tourberville!* But for that one stumbling-block, Horace Tremayne, amongst a million, would have been the successor and representative whom his uncle would have chosen. As it is, the thwarted Baronet meditates upon the chance of his future accession, with the bitterest regret. The circumstance, however, has been most favourable to the fugitive Charles; who never would have escaped disinheritance so long, had there been less potency in the magic of this name. His elder brother, for a transgression of not half the turpitude, underwent the penalty: his father cut him off from his birthright within a month after the offence of which he was guilty had been committed. But then, there was another son—another Tourberville—to succeed him.

Now, there remains only Charles to convey to posterity this idolized patronymic; and, were he ten times more profligate than his conduct has proved him, Sir Reginald would not do the world so much wrong, as to deprive the sole surviving lineal descendant of his illustrious house of the means of keeping up its dignity and importance."

"Then, the Baronet supposes, that this inestimable son will marry again? Or, perhaps, is actually the husband of the virtuous dame with whom he fled? Did any divorce take place in consequence of her elopement?"

"Yes; and enormous damages were awarded to the man whom she liberated from the burthen of supplying her extravagance, and emancipated from the slavery of submitting to her caprices. I always thought him a very enviable fellow in being so well paid for getting rid of a plague. No marriage, however, could immediatlely follow the divorce, since Mrs. Tourberville was still alive; but whether Charles noosed himself to her *spotless friend* after her decease, I really cannot say. Sir Reginald is, probably, in possession of more accurate information; but

it is a subject on which he is impenetrably silent; and I do not much wonder that it should be so; for if his son is still a widower, the old gentleman, I doubt not, is heartily vexed; and if he is re-married, and that to the partner of his flight, such a daughter-in-law cannot inspire him with much exultation."

"What is Mr. Tourberville's inducement," said I, "for remaining so long abroad? Is he not perfectly aware of the lenity which his father is disposed to extend towards him?"

"Yes, yes; he is, I make no question, fully apprized, by this time, of the debt of gratitude which he owes, not indeed to Sir Reginald's paternal indulgence, but to his paternal ambition. However, it should seem that a residence in the capital of France is more congenial to his taste, than a return to the country where he would be placed so immediately within the reach of his father's observation. The last account I heard of him, gave wretched promise of amendment in his morals."

"How much it would be for the ease of my conscience," cried my mother, "were

I able to persuade myself, that a being whose life is so valueless, were in a fit state to die! I might then wish, without remorse, for his speedy removal from a world, wherein, as Orlando says, he '*only fills up a place, which may be better supplied when he has made it empty*'."

"Far, far better indeed!" cried Mr. Westcroft with warmth, "Tremayne is generous, manly, and sensible. His pursuits have, hitherto, reflected honour both on his head and heart; his talents are such, that the more his sphere of influence is extended, the more beneficial his existence will be to society. It has been reported, and I think with some truth, that his uncle, in the first heat of his resentment against Charles at the time of his elopement, made an offer to Tremayne of securing to him by a new settlement, all the rights of succession to his title and estate, provided he would immediately take his name, and bear the arms of Tourberville. But Horace, justly satisfied with his own honourable appellation, as well as his hereditary scutcheon, declined the proposal, observing that, 'were he capable of

renouncing the hitherto unsullied name of his father, and of assuming that of his cousin, in order to make him a beggar, he should be a disgrace to both families, and an object of contempt to himself!"

"I hope," cried my mother, charmed by this trait, "that the patrimonial inheritance of this fine young man, is such, as to reconcile even the most worldly-minded of his friends to so disinterested a cession."

"He is the son of a military man," replied Mr. Westcroft, "and not so amply provided with the gifts of fortune as his liberal spirit deserves; but he is perfectly independent, and extremely well disposed, I assure you, to assert his right to be so considered.—And now, lady Stavordale, have I not given you a reasonable portion of Tourberville anecdote."

"Why, yes; for one sitting I think you have; but it would have been impossible to go on without some such interpreter of their odd ways, and still odder looks. We are, I believe, to be intimate with these people; and, as that is the case, you will allow, that a little anxiety to understand them; or if you

like better to call it so, a little curiosity about their affairs, is very allowable. Ours, I dare say, are by this time pretty well known to them."

"Yours, my dear madam, are involved in less intricacy, from being connected with less disgrace. When the worst that *can* be said of a Stavordale is proclaimed, it will amount only to the discovery, that there have been among you some individuals not very remarkable for prudence; but none stigmatized with depravity."

"I hope not!—Our poor George is a pattern of perfection compared with Charles Tourberville; and, as for the rest of us, we have only the usual allotment of vanity and folly incident to our species."

My father and Philippa, who had been out walking, now entered the room, and Mr. Westcroft began talking very pleasantly of the last new poem, and the strictures made upon it in the Edinburgh Review.

Blanch came back from Bovil Court much pleased, upon the whole, with her visit. She

owned to me, however, in confidence, that there *were* intervals of great languor; and that, during so long a day, she was often induced to wish for a companion of brighter parts, and quicker intelligence than poor Miss Tourberville.—" But she was perfectly good-natured, and did every thing in her power to oblige and amuse me. I liked the garden and pleasure-grounds, and I liked all that I saw of lady Earlsford; but she left us too much to ourselves; and Miss Tourberville's conversation is really fatiguing from its want of connexion, and, if I may be allowed to say so, from its want of meaning. She jumbled into the same speech—stories of her dogs, complaints of her shoe-maker, praises of her birds, and outcries against the heat!—Then, she began wondering at the difference of our height; asked me when my birth-day would be; and told me how much she liked going to the Opera.—All this disjointed talk, to which she sometimes required an answer, tired me so exceedingly that I often found it difficult to avoid letting her see me yawn."

" But you *did* avoid it," said I, smiling.

"I believe so;—at least, I hope so."

"Was not the dinner more lively? Had you any company?"

"No; there was only Mr. Lloyd and lord Earlsford. Mr. Tremayne had set out early in the morning to attend some county meeting at N. and they were not expected to return till the next day."

"How did lord Earlsford behave to you?"

"I do not believe that he once spoke to me. But yet he was civil; for, at dessert, he handed to me some of the finest fruit upon the table; and I really think, that, if I would but *begin first*, as Mrs. Crosby expresses it, he would now talk to me again as if nothing had ever been the matter."

"Well, if you continue to visit at Bovil Court, I think that, some day or other, you *must* begin first. But how did your evening go off?

"Oh, a great deal better. Lady Earlsford did not again forsake us, after we came out of the dining room: indeed she was so good as to apologize to me for having absented herself so much in the morning; but Sir Reginald, she said, had given her two *franks*;

both of which it was necessary, if they were used at all, to get ready for that day's post. I had a great mind to tell her, half jest half earnest, that I hoped she would never invite me again on a letter-writing day. However, I was afraid of being thought flippant; and so I only simpered, and said something about the concern it would give me to have interfered with any employment in which she was engaged. After this, she proposed to me a drive to the plantations in a delightful little open carriage. We were out till dusk; and when we came in to tea and coffee, lord Earlsford and Mr. Lloyd appeared again; and before the tea things were sent away, Mrs. Crosby entered. She was very kindly received, and looked as happy, though not quite so bustling, as she had done at her own house."

"Had you any music?"——

"Yes; but first there was an attempt made by Mrs. Crosby and Miss Tourberville to teach me cribbage; a game they are very fond of, but of which I could make nothing. So they allowed me to resign my cards, and played with all their might themselves.

Lady Earlsford then invited me to sit next her on the sofa, and read aloud a little manuscript poem, which she told me, in a whisper, had been written by Miss Tourberville's mother. It was full of pretty-sounding words; but I could not quite understand what it was about; and Lady Earlsford's manner of reading was so new and strange to me, that when she paused, I could hardly think of a word to say."

"Cannot you describe this *new and strange* manner?—What was it like?"

"It was like declamation;—like grandmamma's way of reading yesterday, for a joke, those ridiculous verses in the newspaper that were meant to be so tender and pathetic. I really thought at first, that Lady Earlsford was reading in that way for a joke too!—but I soon found my mistake, by the expression of her countenance; and then I tried to look as sad and pensive as herself."

"In which, I dare say, you admirably succeeded!—But what became of Mr. Lloyd, and his pupil during this *lecture*?—Did they sit and listen?"—

"Not three minutes!—They went out

and sauntered upon the lawn, and did not come in again, till the poem was finished. Lady Earlsford, however, had not yet done with the display of Mrs. Tourberville's *remains of genius*, as she called them. She drew from her bosom a small gold key, which was suspended to a chain of the most delicate workmanship, and opened a richly-ornamented Indian casket, out of which she took a white sattin letter-case, scented with attar of roses, and containing a set of tiny paintings upon ivory, each wrapped in its separate covering of silver paper; and representing—some, groups of flowers—others, butterflies—others, fairy birds, or miniature shells, coral and sea-weed!—These things were all highly finished; and cost, I make no doubt, a great deal of time and application: but I own that they excited in me far less admiration than surprise, and I would rather have looked at the rudest sketch—at the merest outline, drawn with a free, spirited touch, and exhibiting some subject capable of expression and character, than at all the minute neatness, vivid colouring, and laboured insignificance, of ten thousand of

these Lilliputian pictures! Lady Earlsford, however, expatiated upon their merit in terms almost as rapturous as if she had been contemplating the sublimest productions of Raffaelle or Michael Angelo! What she must have thought of my inanimate praise, I dread to ask myself. I am sure she took me either for a fool, or for the most envious of human beings."

"Did she shew you any more of her friend's remains?"

"No; I dare say that she was disgusted at my want of taste, for, after the paintings were put away, and the gold key was replaced next her heart,—'its long-appointed station,'—she told me,—her manner became colder towards me, and she addressed her conversation almost exclusively to Mr. Lloyd. Finding myself out of favour, I got up and went towards the cribbage players, and stood some time looking on at the game, but secretly wishing myself at home. Presently, Miss Tourberville called out to Lady Earlsford: "My dearest aunt, I asked Miss Blanch Stavordale to bring some music with her, and she has been so good as to comply."—

"I hope then," said her ladyship, "she will also be good enough to let us have the pleasure of hearing her. Mr. Lloyd, shall I trouble you to open the instrument?—Earlsford, ring for more lights."

"This," continued Blanch, "was no very cordial way of being asked; and I felt some reluctance to station myself at the pianoforte without any friend near me, between two great branch candlesticks, throwing a strong glare upon my face, and exposing me to the observation of ever body in the room. I therefore asked Lady Earlsford's permission to put out all the lights but one: and that I placed where it would make me least conspicuous. I then sat down with tolerable courage, and played and sung, from memory, the shortest and the easiest air I could recollect. Before I got quite through it, the door slowly and gently opened, and Sir Reginald Tourberville, with Mr. Tremayne entered the room."

"Well,—You finished your song, I hope?"——

"Not immediately; for the sight of them surprised me so much, that I forgot every

remaining note and word of the air.—But I was not allowed to stir from my post; the formidable branch-candlesticks were relighted; a music-book was spread upon the desk before me, and with the baronet on one side, and his nephew on the other, I felt so encouraged and supported, that I was soon able to begin again, and, with intervals between, they made me go on, from one song to another till my grandfather's carriage was announced."—

"And how did it happen that they gained admission into the house without ringing, or being overheard as they drove up to the door?"

"Their coachman, they said, had drunk so freely to the success of Sir Reginald's favourite candidate,—(for it was some electioneering business which carried them to N.—) that when they arrived near the avenue which leads from the main road to Bovil-court, Mr. Tremayne, who there intended to alight, and take leave of his uncle, perceived that the man was too sleepy or too much intoxicated to be able to sit upright upon the box. He communicated the

pleasant discovery to the baronet, who immediately got out; sent the carriage home under the care of a footman, and walked with his nephew to Lady Earlsford's, to wait till her carriage could be made ready to convey him to Eastvale. The hall-door was open, and thus they effected their entrance without noise or difficulty."

Mrs. Crosby has been here this morning, and it fell to my lot to receive her; my mother being out, and Philippa, who was practising, not chusing to disturb herself from her employment. After the good lady had been seated a little while, and I had satisfied her anxiety to hear of the health of all the family, and in return, had been gratified by a very favourable account of that of Mr. Crosby, she adverted to the evening on which she had met Blanch at Bovil-court:

"How pretty she looked, my dear Miss Stavordale;" cried the kind-hearted woman, "and how glad I was to see her so comfortably sitting there, just like one of the fa-

mily; and my lady reading so many sweet verses to her, and shewing her all poor dear Mrs. Tourberville's innocent little pictures! Oh, it was quite delightful!"

"Blanch is very much obliged to you, Mrs. Crosby, for interesting yourself so warmly about her."

"Not a bit—not a bit, my dear Miss Stavordale!—I can't *help* being interested about her!—But do let me tell you how the old Don—Sir Reginald Tourberville, I mean—a proud old senator!—how he spoke of her after she went away. I can't remember his exact words; for he talked just as if he had been saying something out of a book; but the meaning was, that, though he wishes so much for the *perpetration* (perpetuation I suppose he said) of his honourable name, yet to be the parent of *such* a young creature as Blanch Stavordale, would have reconciled him to the mortification of being, perhaps, condemned to leave no male descendant in the direct line of succession, to inherit the honours of his race."

"Did he say this before his poor little grand-daughter, Mrs. Crosby?"

"Why yes, my dear Ma'am, he did; and that, to be sure, was not quite so considerate: but yet, I was pleased to hear him talk in such a high way, of our pretty Miss Blanch; —and if you had but seen Mr. Tremayne! His eyes, I declare, sparkled like diamonds! O, if *she* was the heiress, he would not grudge her the estate, I am very sure!—But my lady, poor dear soul, seemed sadly vexed; and she sighed, and fixed her eyes upon Miss Tourberville with such a look of sorrow, that, I protest, she made my heart quite ache."

"Lady Earlsford is so fond of her niece, that I am not at all surprised at her being hurt by what Sir Reginald so unfeelingly said."

"No, nor I; but still, you know, my lady must be aware, that a mere string of words could not do Miss Tourberville any real harm. Let him say what he will, his grand-daughter must come before a stranger for the estate.—But I have not told you, my dear Ma'am, what he said about Miss Blanch's playing and singing. He declared that it was music that *went to the soul*; and that if hers

were powers which could be rewarded by money, he scarcely knows any luxury which he should prefer to that of being able to command, at pleasure, the exertions of such a performer."

"Well, Mrs. Crosby," said I, laughing, "your memory, I do believe, is more retentive of whatever may do honour to Blanch, than that of any other friend out of her own family!"

"To tell you the truth," answered she, laughing also, "I was so afraid of forgetting what the old gentleman had said, (and I knew that you would like to hear it,) that I wrote down just a hint or two of the matter upon a slip of paper, as soon as ever I got home. But, dear! I don't suppose I remembered half!"

"Have you," said I, curious to see a document so singular,—"have you that paper about you?"

She felt in her pocket, and, after an unsuccessful search of some duration, at length drew forth a soiled and crumpled piece of paper, on one side of which was a "List of things wanted from Ashbourn," including

many very homely, though useful articles; and, on the other, the following memorandum:—

"Sir R. T. said she was as good as a son: used many hard words.

"Talked about his soul and her singing.

"Wished he could buy her, &c."

I knew that these ridiculous *hints* would so highly amuse my mother, that, under pretence of referring to them for the benefit of my own memory, I asked Mrs. Crosby's leave to keep them. With the utmost good-humour she consented; and, soon afterwards, terminated her visit.

Just as she was going out, Mrs. Talbot, in a curricle, driven by a very fashionable-looking young man, dashed up to the gate. Philippa, who saw them from the dressing-room window, thought that it was now *her* turn to do the honours, and immediately descended. I had no wish to contest the point with her, and would willingly have withdrawn; but Mrs. Talbot had seen me standing upon the steps at the hall-door listening to Mrs. Crosby's *more last words*; and therefore to retire immediately was impossible.

The gentleman by whom she was accompanied, she introduced to us as her nephew, Mr. Maurice Villiers. He proved conversible and well-bred; has a very agreeable countenance; seems somewhat inclined to be a coxcomb in his dress, though not in his manners; and looks scarcely more than one or two and twenty.

On the entrance of my father, who came forth from the library when he heard that there was a male visitor in the house, I stole off; for Philippa was in high spirits, and, I plainly saw, wanted no coadjutor in the task of entertaining our company. Indeed, it is often manifest, that one of her favourite objects is, to appropriate Mrs. Talbot, and two or three other select individuals, as her own exclusive intimates. This, I have been too indolent always to oppose; and now, I sometimes perceive, that she really thinks herself injured, and regards me as an intruder, if I enter the room in which she and any of these chosen few are sitting. How many ways there are of being consequential, and (I am afraid I must say) impertinent!

My father's grounds, which, if compared for extent and high cultivation to those of Eastvale, are utterly insignificant, possess, however, one natural embellishment superior to any which art has been able to bestow upon the decorated lands of our wealthy neighbour. The object I allude to, is a capricious and romantic stream, forming the western boundary of our little domain; and, after a thousand fanciful meanderings, discharging its scanty tribute of waters about a mile beyond our house, into the river Dove. At its source, amongst the rocky and wild scenery which forms our northern horizon, it dashes turbulently over huge blocks of stone; falls in sheets, white with froth, from ledge to ledge; brawls, shafes, and throws up its spray into the air, with all the self-importance that might beseem the outset of the mighty Danube!—Presently, its unmeaning fury abates; it finds a channel less rugged and abrupt; and, though still it murmurs at the occasional impediments which it has to surmount, those murmurs are no longer hoarse and threatening, but seem to presage

approaching equanimity and good-humour. At this point of its varied course, and full in view of our premises, it is crossed by a narrow wooden bridge, formerly much used by horsemen and foot-passengers, but now, from its suspected insecurity, entirely neglected. It adds a very picturesque feature to the scenery, the barren and craggy banks, at that spot, rising almost perpendicularly to a considerable height; then overhanging and darkening the deep water beneath, and forming a sort of broken irregular arch, which the bridge connects and finishes.

When the stream reaches our grounds, it runs smoothly over a bed of pebbles; its borders are fringed with copse-wood, and rise gradually and verdantly into a leafy amphitheatre, resounding, I may almost say, at every season of the year with the melody of birds;—for even in winter it is peopled with robins. To the left, in its further progress towards the Dove, the rivulet traverses a rich tract of meadow-land, fertilizing, as well as beautifying, as it flows, the face of the country; and winding so circuitously along, that one might be tempted to imagine

it often meditated to revisit, once more, the rocky source from whence it springs.

My father, who still occasionally loves the amusement of rowing and sailing, keeps a light pleasure-boat upon this nameless mountain-brook; and the spot where it is moored is so shady, so secluded, so every way inviting, that, during the late sultry weather, I have been induced, very frequently, to convey thither my sketch-book and work-basket; and, accompanied by Blanch, to spend whole mornings, either in the boat, or under the trees upon the margin of the water. Yesterday, as usual, we repaired to this favourite haunt, about two hours after breakfast. I was in no humour to draw, and gave up my pencil and book to Blanch, who began an excellent sketch of the rustic bridge; of the rude masses of stone on which its extremities repose; and of the dark current flowing at a great depth beneath, through the arch seen obliquely above it.

Whilst she was thus engaged, I read to her some of the scenes in which she so much delights, of Shakespear's *Merchant of Venice*. This employment necessarily confin-

ing my eyes in a downward direction, I saw nothing that was passing around me; nor thought of any thing but the *Rialto* and *Belmont*, till startled, and induced hastily to raise my head, by hearing Blanch exclaim, in an accent of horror that thrilled through my frame, "Oh, heaven and earth!—Look there! look—look!"

Look, indeed, I did;—but it was at *her*; not at the object to which she alluded; and when I saw that her eyes seemed bursting from their sockets, and that her complexion had assumed an almost ghastly hue, I felt persuaded that some venomous reptile had fastened upon her, and expected every instant to see the swift and loathsome creature start into view and slink guiltily away.—Trembling, I caught her hand, and would have questioned her; but, as if recalled to the power of exertion by my touch, she sprang like lightning from her seat; flew to the rope (for we were on land) by which the boat was secured; applied to it the knife with which she had been cutting her drawing-chalk, and divided it in less time than I can take in relating the action. This done,

she with equal celerity leaped into the loosened bark; and, with a strength which perhaps at no other time she could have commanded, pushed it from the shore, and rowed (an art which my father has taught her) precipitately towards the bridge.

I then descried the cause of her terror, and shared in it most amply! Slowly traversing the tottering and decayed structure, I beheld a man leading a horse by the bridle, and already some paces advanced over the perilous pass. It was Mr. Tremayne! My blood curdled as I viewed him. The fearful height of the mouldering planks which supported him from the water; the well known depth of the stream at that particular spot; the increased danger of his situation from the weight of the animal that followed him; all rushed to my thoughts at once, and nearly distracted me with apprehension. Meanwhile, Blanch, by dint of supernatural exertion, had already attained her projected station; and relaxing her efforts when within a short distance of the bridge, she sat with upturned head and immoveable gaze, resolutely awaiting the event. A very brief in-

terval decided it. The horse, after suffering himself to be led without resistance, nearly half way over the pass, suddenly, and as if instinctively, becoming aware of the danger of further progress, shrunk, snorting, back; struck with violence against the side-railing of the crazy fabric — broke it down — and, whilst (alarmed at the crash) his struggles and plunges redoubled, the planks beneath gave way, he totally lost his footing, and fell through the hideous aperture, dragging with him his defenceless master, who, by having unfortunately entangled his hand in the reins, was completely at his mercy! Never shall I forget the agony of that moment! The shriek I uttered brought the gardener breathless to my side: — no words were needful to explain what had occurred; the dismal story told itself; but the poor man, unable to swim, only looked on in silent consternation; and stood with clasped hands upon the brink of the water, as powerless as myself. I desired him to hasten to the house, and to bring any kind of aid he could procure. But long ere he returned, Blanch—the heroic Blanch—(prepared for what would happen, and preserving

amidst all her affright, a presence of mind scarcely less than miraculous) rowed with incredible energy towards the struggling, sinking Tremayne. Twice he disappeared, and twice he again rose to the surface of the water. The second time that he became visible, Blanch was near enough to catch his outstretched hand, and to guide it to the edge of the boat. It mechanically grasped, and clung to the support so providentially offered; and whilst, to steady her little bark, she removed to the side opposite to that by which he was holding, he gradually recovered sufficient consciousness to make an effort for his own preservation; and to contrive, streaming as he was, to climb into the boat. What a moment of exultation for our admirable Blanch! Had I loved her less, I could have found in my heart to envy her the rapturous delight she must have then experienced—She had been, as afterwards most convincingly appeared, the instrument, under Providence, of saving a human life; of preserving a being idolized by his family; admired by the world; and looked up to with reverence and hope by all who anticipated a time when

they may benefit by his more enlarged ability to serve them. I have been assured, that many of the tenants upon the East Vale estate have been frequently heard to say, that if any thing were to happen to prevent the heir now abroad from returning to take possession, the day that should invest Mr. Tremayne with the authority of landlord would be the happiest of their lives. But to return to Blanch: —

Her little vessel having taken in its valuable freight, she lost no time in asking questions, or in bestowing either congratulations or condolences; but again putting forth her best strength, rowed back to the accustomed mooring-place, before Mr. Tremayne had acquired sufficient clearness of perception to know where he was, what had happened, or who was near him. The shock of the fall had in a manner stunned him; and the struggle for life being over, he seemed, from the effects of violent pain, to have so nearly fainted, that, when the boat touched land, I was heartily glad to behold the approach of a large party of frightened and vociferous assistants. My mother headed the motley

rout. She was followed by my sisters, my father, every servant and labourer in and about the premises; and lastly (too much shaken by alarm to keep pace with their less interested impatience) appeared the poor trembling, palid uncle, Sir Reginald Tourberville.

"Where is he? Where is my boy?" exclaimed the agitated old man, the moment he drew within sight of the landing-place—"Where is my dear Horace?"

I pointed to the boat, from which, assisted by my father and some of the servants, Mr. Tremayne was just stepping on shore; and in a cheerful tone, said: "Compose yourself, Sir Reginald, for all is well, and every body is safe."

Tears glistened in his eyes as he cast them upwards for an instant in silent ecstacy; and then, approaching his drenched, and still bewildered kinsman, he would have hugged him, I believe, in a close embrace, regardless of the condition of his attire, had not my mother drawn him back, saying:—

"Let the poor soul alone, my dear Sir Reginald, I entreat! Let him make the

best of his way to the house, to put on dry garments, and to recover the faculties of sight, speech, and hearing! all these, at present, seem suspended."

"He should have immediate medical assistance," cried the Baronet with renewed alarm. "Whom can we send for?"

My father instantly gave orders that Mr. Crosby should be summoned; and the party then moved on; nobody thinking, in the perturbation of the moment, of enquiring into the particulars of the accident; nobody aware of how much was due to the activity, foresight, and self-possession of my invaluable Blanch. When they were all gone, I looked round for her, eager to express my warm and heartfelt approbation. She was not in sight; and, knowing that she had held back from joining the group that was moving towards the house, I gently called her. A low, tremulous voice, from an adjacent cluster of almost impervious shrubs and trees, faintly answered: "I am here, my dear aunt." I went to her with some anxiety, and found her seated upon one of the low, straggling branches of a stunted oak, drying her eyes, and apparently just

recovered—or rather, just disturbed—from a hearty fit of crying. She rose up as I approached her, and with an *April-day* smile, advanced towards me, saying:

"There is nothing the matter—do not be frightened; but only I had been a good deal agitated, and my heart was full, and if I had not had the relief of shedding tears in a corner, I do believe I should have been suffocated!"

"I understand, and can well enter into the feelings you describe, my dearest Blanch," said I; and as I spoke, I attempted to take her hand; but shrinking, and drawing it back whilst a slight cry of pain escaped her, she said: "I cannot let you touch me: I have, in some way or other, hurt this hand; and I suffer exceedingly if I only move it."

"But let me, my love, at least, *look* at it." She held out to me the prettiest little delicate hand in the world; which, I instantly perceived, had been violently sprained; and was, as well as its otherwise less injured partner, blistered in the palm, most cruelly.

"My poor Blanch!" exclaimed I—"Is this the reward of your courage and enterprize?"

"No, no;" answered she, cheerfully; "my reward is in their happy success!—But I wonder," she soon added, in a less lively tone, "I wonder what became of Mr. Tremayne's beautiful horse.—Do you think the poor animal is drowned!"

"I dare say not," said I, half tempted to smile at the simplicity of this enquiry in a young *heroine*.—"I dare say he saved himself by swimming back to shore. But come my dear girl, come with me into the house, that we may get something done to this poor hand."

"Oh, Clavering will manage that: she is the best doctress in the world for sprains and bruises, and all that sort of mischief."

"Well then, Clavering shall be applied to; but the sooner she sees her patient, the better chance she will have of effecting a speedy cure."

I then hurried her out of the pleasure grounds, and, at her own request, we entered the house by a side-door leading down a long stone passage connected with the offices, to a back staircase, which, after some windings and turnings, conducted us to my

bed-room. When there, I instantly rang the bell, to desire Clavering's attendance; but as no one appeared, and Blanch acknowledged that she felt increased pain every moment, I went myself in search of the tardy housekeeper, promising, if she were any where to be found, to bring her immediately.

The first person I met, and the last I should have calculated upon seeing in that part of the house, was Sir Reginald Tourberville. He was just coming out of the chamber which I found had been appropriated to Mr. Tremayne; and, on perceiving me, eagerly enquired whether Mr. Crosby was arrived.—I told him, that as that gentleman had not made his appearance above stairs, it was scarcely probable he could be in the house: "But is Mr. Tremayne," I added, "seriously injured by his accident, Sir Reginald?"

"It is evident," replied the Baronet, "that he has either broken or dislocated his left arm, and I am afraid he has also received several severe contusions from the falling fragments of the bridge. Do tell me,

my dear Miss Stavordale, how this unfortunate business happened."

I requested him to step into my mother's dressing-room, promising to join him there as soon as I had found the housekeeper and despatched her to my niece.

"Your niece? Is she also hurt?—I am grieved to hear it!—But the person of whom you are in quest is in Horace's room. I will call her out to you."

I allowed him to do as he said; well aware, that, in a case of broken bones, Clavering, with all her imputed skill, could not be half so useful as in the management of a simple sprain.

Directing her, therefore, as soon as she came forth from the chamber of one invalid, to repair to that of another, I next proceeded with Sir Reginald to the dressing-room. My mother and Philippa were already sitting there; my father and his old servant were with Mr. Tremayne.

I now began, by general as well as particular desire (for my Mother and Sister were most anxious to know the details of the affair), a full but unvarnished account of the

whole transaction. The effect my narrative produced was more than adequate to the expectations I had formed. My mother, who, with all her boasted exemption from enthusiasm, is, in some cases, the most prone to that—passion, shall I call it? of any person I know, was, at one moment, pale and breathless with terror, at another, exalted into admiration, or melted into tears; and throughout the whole account, agitated by the strongest, though the most diversified emotions. Sir Reginald's feelings were, if possible, yet more intense; indeed, the interest which *he* had at stake, far surpassed that of any one else who heard me; and his sensations, during my recital, were proportionably more acute. Both auditors lavished upon Blanch every encomiastic epithet which our language can supply; and even Philippa, feebly inclined as she commonly is, to speak of our young inmate with unqualified kindness, allowed, that her conduct on the present occasion had been incomparable.

"It outsoars all praise!" exclaimed the Baronet. "At an age so tender, to have evinced such astonishing firmness,—such

prompt, yet collected energy,—such forethought and such mental, as well as physical vigour,—exceeds every instance of youthful judgment and capacity I have almost ever heard of!—It admits not of a doubt that, considering the disabled condition to which Tremayne's arm was reduced, and his consequent inability to swim, he *must* have perished but for the timely approach of the boat; and her anticipation of his probable demand for it; her wisdom in keeping it stationary just at the point where she might be near enough to give him speedy assistance; and yet too distant to incur danger from his fall—how wonderful, how admirable, in an inexperienced girl, are all these proofs of reflection and discernment!—Oh, Lady Stavordale, how proud may you justly feel of such a grand-child!"

"I am glad," cried my Mother, though with moistened eyes, "I am glad there will be any *justice* in the case; for to own the truth, Sir Reginald, I *am* most exceedingly proud of her!"—Then, turning to me, she added, in a lower tone—"Who would have expected that the daughter of George Stavor-

dale would have had so much useful sense?"

The arrival of Mr. Crosby, well known to be skilful both in surgery and medicine, broke up the conference. Sir Reginald went with him into Mr. Tremayne's room, and I returned to Blanch, followed by my mother.

We found her, though not entirely free from pain, considerably easier since Clavering had made her undergo the process of fomenting and bandaging, and had slung her poor hand in a scarf. My mother embraced her most fondly, and gave her much judicious and well-earned praise; but forbore all those flights of admiration which had been uttered in the dressing-room; highly to my satisfaction; for Blanch is truly modest; and to hear herself so prodigally extolled, would equally amaze and abash her.

She enquired after Mr. Tremayne with great interest; and expressed sincere concern for what he must suffer from the state of his arm. My mother said, that its fracture—if, indeed, it *was* fractured—could only be attributed to the struggles, as he fell, of the *beautiful horse* she had been so sorry for; of

whose bridle Mr. Tremayne had hold when the bridge gave way: "And do you not think he deserves drowning for being the cause of such an accident?"

"No, indeed, dear Grandmamma! I only think that I should almost hate his master, were *he* to be of that opinion."

One of the maids now came to say, that Mrs. Clavering was wanted in Mr. Tremayne's room.

"Oh, make haste, make haste," cried Blanch, "Go, and do him all the good you can! I wish you could as easily make him well, as you have me."

My mother desired Clavering not to let Mr. Crosby go away till she had seen him; and then returned to the dressing-room, whither Blanch and I accompanied her.

Our feelings, during the interval that elapsed previous to the appearance of the medical practitioner, were far from pleasant; and our vicinity to the room in which we knew that a painful operation was performing, considerably added to their nervousness. Our imaginations, assisting the delusion, led us to suppose that every sound

we heard proceeded from the invalid's chamber; Blanch even fancied, that she once could distinguish a groan; and in her dread of hearing another, she buried her head in the pillows of the sofa, and continued in that position, till she was nearly stifled. How strange are the varied effects of strong agitation which differences of times and circumstances will produce! When called upon for action, Blanch could contemplate a scene of imminent peril, with the fortitude and composure of the firmest man: when obliged, in passive quietude, to listen to the supposed accents of suffering, to endure suspense, and to give scope to the workings of her own fancy—she was more perturbed and more overcome than any of the party.

At length our uncertainty was relieved by the entrance of my father and Sir Reginald Tourberville, whom we were eagerly beginning to question, when the latter, harassed and distressed, as his pale aspect still denoted him to be, perceiving Blanch, advanced hastily towards her, and without being able to speak, folded her in his arms with a tenderness that was truly paternal. Deeply touched,

and already in that state of spirits which the slightest additional emotion will subdue, Blanch dropped her head upon his shoulder, and wept like a child.—All present surveyed them with sympathizing emotion, and, for a while, stood aloof without comment or interference. My mother was the first to approach and address them.

"This may give great ease to your *own* feelings, my dear Blanch," cried she, "but must really be very trying to those of Sir Reginald. Come, come; exert a little self-command. We know that you *can*,—we know that, upon occasion, you can be firm as a rock!"

The poor girl raised her pale face, withdrew herself gently from the arms of her venerable supporter, and, making a strong effort to recover more composure, led him by the hand towards the sofa from which she had just risen; and, as she placed herself upon it beside him, asked, in a voice that, at least, *attempted* to be steady, how he had left his nephew.

"In a way, I trust, to do well; but not so immediately, as we all, I doubt not, wish.

The fracture was a dreadful one; and though Mr. Crosby has, I believe, performed his part most ably, and certainly most expeditiously, the fortitude of my poor Horace has been put to a cruelly severe trial. But still, sweet Blanch, how thankful ought I to be, suffering as he is, that he is *there;* that he is yet spared to me, to be again ere long, I flatter myself, the comfort and joy of my existence! To you I owe this blessing; a blessing, which the feelings I have experienced within these last two hours, have taught me better how to value than, perhaps, I ever did before. They have taught me too," added he, shuddering, "what would have been my present state of my mind, had the danger from which you rescued him, proved as fatal as it was menacing."

My mother, to give a less gloomy turn to his thoughts, now requested his directions respecting the propriety of acquainting lady Earlsford with what happened:

"How shall the painful task be performed, Sir Reginald? Shall I or one of my daughters write to her? Shall we ask Mr. Crosby

to call upon her? In short, how ought we to act?"

"I am going to her myself, dear madam," answered the Baronet, "for though I dread witnessing the ungovernable agitation to which she will give way, I hope that, by undertaking the embassy in person, I shall succeed in prevailing upon her to abstain at least for this day, from coming hither to break in upon the perfect quiet which it is now so indispensably necessary to preserve in her son's apartment.—I say nothing, my kind friends, of the trouble which this miserable business is occasioning you;—I know that you are too benevolent to regard that."

My father and mother, in the same breath, entreated not to hear another word upon the subject. They jointly pressed him to make the house as much his own,—to come, and go, and to do as exactly as he pleased with regard to seeing or not seeing any of the family, as if there was no creature in the dwelling but Mr. Tremayne and his attendants. He thanked them most cordially; and soon after went down to the carriage, which, du-

ring so long an interval, had been waiting at our gate.

It was with the intention of making a mere passing call, that he had first entered the house, though subsequent events had so painfully and unusually extended the duration of his visit. Of Mr. Tremayne's plans for the disposal of the morning, he at that time knew nothing; and, in answer to my father's civil enquiries after him, had only said, that lady Earlsford monopolized so much of his nephew's time, that there never had been a period when he had seen him with less frequency and comfort.

I now remember, in explanation of Mr. Tremayne's choice of so wild and sequestered a glen for his ride, that, on one of the occasions when he and I have lately met and conversed, I described to him the mountain stream and its surrounding scenery, intending, at some future period, to induce him to explore these haunts with my father, and some of the family, and, perhaps, to give up a day to the amusement of rowing in our little boat. The bridge—the eventful bridge—I only incidentally mentioned as an ornamental

feature in the landscape, omitting to speak of its frail condition, from the total disuse into which it has fallen, and the consequent forgetfulness that it had ever been erected with a view to utility.—Blanch says, that long before she uttered the exclamation which so much startled me, she had seen Mr. Tremayne, though without recognizing him at the time, riding securely and quietly through the sort of hanging-wood which faces, on the opposite side of the stream, the spot where we were sitting. His approach to the bridge had, however, been concealed from her by intervening trees; nor did she, in the most distant degree, suspect his purpose of venturing upon it, till, on looking up from her drawing, to correct some fault which she had made in the perspective of the rude arch, she actually saw him step upon the treacherous boards, and begin to cross the current. The noise made by the turbulent stream, just above the spot where he stood, would have prevented his hearing her call to him to retreat, even had she been able, at that terrible juncture, to exalt her voice to its loudest pitch: "So there was nothing to be done,

you know, my dear aunt, but to loosen the boat, and row towords him as fast as I could."

In the course of the afternoon that good creature, Mrs. Crosby, came here, with a most earnest offer of her services as head-nurse, during the night, in Mr. Tremayne's room. We declined the proposal for the present, there being already in attendance upon him (besides Clavering occasionally) his own servant, and a very respectable man, one of Sir Reginald's principal domestics. Too many assistants might be as bad as too few.

With something like returning composure, after the alarming incidents of the day, we were all assembled in the evening at tea, when the trample of horses and the sound of wheels caught our attention; and the next moment a ring (which would have been as loud as it was impatient, but for the precaution which had been taken of muffling the bell) was heard at the gate; and even before the summons could be answered, the steps of a carriage were let down,

the hasty advance of some person up the gravel-walk could be distinguished,—and, the instant the house-door was opened, lady Earlsford rushed into the hall, and thence, with looks of wild perturbation, into the room where we were sitting!—

"My son, my son!" she exclaimed, "guide me to him! Shew me where lies my mangled, agonizing son!"

"My dear lady Earlsford,"—began my mother, in a gentle, but expostulating tone.

"Attempt not to oppose me!" interrupted our strange visitor, with yet increasing vehemence, "drive me not mad by further resistance! Oh, I have waited for this moment of freedom with an intenseness of solicitude which no language can describe! My brother—my cruel, inflexible brother has watched all my movements—kept guard over me throughout the day—condemned me to endure, hour after hour, the horrors of suspense without the slightest touch of pity!—and now, when at length the blessed period of deliverance from restraint so inhuman is arrived, when at last, even *his* vigilant tyranny is eluded, think you, lady Stavordale, I will be withheld by *your* usurped

authority? No, no!—Shew me to my poor Horace's room, or be assured, that I will explore every corner of your house, till I find him."

We all stared at her with amazement. Her looks were as unsettled as her language was extravagant; and my dear father mistaking what he heard, either for temporary derangement, or authoritative insolence, marched up to her, and, as is generally the case with a placid man, when provoked, giving way to more anger than was needful, he cried:—

"Are you in your right senses, Madam? Do you know what you are saying? Where you are? and to whom you are speaking?—I beg we may have no more of these tragedy rants!—Your son, whilst he is under my roof, shall not be disturbed without the permission of his medical adviser. You are in no state of mind, Heaven knows, to see him with impunity to himself! He has taken a composing medicine; and I tell you again, Lady Earlsford, positively and absolutely, you shall not break in upon him!"

"There—there's your *placid man* for

you!" whispered my mother—"stop him who can, when once set off?"

"Whilst my father had been speaking, the features of Lady Earlsford assumed successively an expression of boundless surprise—of indignant haughtiness—and finally of hysterical agitation.—She sunk upon a seat, her chest heaving, her hands clenched together, her eyes rolling in vacancy, and every vein in her throat swelled almost to bursting! I was extremely terrified; and flew to her, to loosen the collar of her dress, and to open the window near which she was seated; whilst my mother tried to make her swallow some hartshorn and water; and Philippa came forward with a smelling-bottle. But all these attempts to assist her were without avail. A fit, the strongest with which I ever saw any one assailed, came on, and whilst it lasted, her struggles, her cries, her convulsive distortions were dreadful. We were forced to call in the assistance of two of the maids to hold her; for my father's heart, compassionate as it usually is, seemed just then quite hardened; and, as he walked up and down the room, shaking his head, and mut-

terring to himself:—" Crack-brained sentimentalist! — Passionate fool! — Disgusting highflyer!"—he now and then stopped a moment, and regarded her with such looks of dislike and impatience, that, had she come to herself whilst undergoing so ungallant an inspection, I verily believe she would have started up to load him with reproaches. But, luckily for us all, before she entirely recovered her consciousness, Mr. Crosby, dear, useful Mr. Crosby, came in. The fit told its own nature, though not its origin; and he, of course, ascribed it to maternal sensibility, delicate nerves, and all the refined and amiable feelings for which lady Earlsford is so celebrated.—My father smiled disdainfully, and left the room; my two sisters and Blanch followed him; and our new patient, when sufficiently restored to observe who remained, felt rejoiced, no doubt, at the absence of her barbarous host. The tremor and debility caused by the violence of so recent an attack, deprived her, for above an hour, of all power to stir from the sofa on which she had been extended. Mr. Crosby, during this time, remained in patient attend-

ance upon her, administering alternate doses of sympathy and camphor-julep, which, by degrees, so effectually revived her, that she was able to apologize to my mother for the trouble which she had occasioned; and once again to renew her importunity for leave to see her son.

Mr. Crosby being present, we gladly left to him the task of refusing, or the responsibility of complying, with a request, which we had hoped would not have been re-urged. He negatived the application with a firmness which we had scarcely ventured to expect; but managed the matter so skilfully, that, far from incurring her displeasure, he rather soothed her wounded feelings by the arguments to which he had recourse. He represented that the interview would be equally injurious to mother and son:

"You have not strength of constitution, my lady," he cried. "You have not *stamina* to bear you through so trying an interview, immediately after an attack so severe as that from which you are hardly yet recovered.—I know the conformation of your frame to be peculiarly delicate; and I know

also, that, to see you looking so agitated and so ill, would hurry and alarm Mr. Tremayne in a manner that might be very seriously prejudicial to him."

"But, Mr. Crosby, I would subdue all outward appearance of agitation."

"That you could not do, my dear lady: you could not subdue the manifest signs of indisposition which are hanging about you; and the first glance would betray to your son that something unusual was the matter."

To this, and various other dissuasive suggestions, Lady Earlsford finally, though still most reluctantly, acceded. She soon afterwards begged me to ring for her carriage; and I then, as she had been so unwell, made an offer of accompanying her home. This she declined; but with much apparent gratitude; and Mr. Crosby, assuring her, that he could, at present, be perfectly well spared from her son's room, entreated permission to attend her himself to Boyil-Court. Both my mother and I seconded the proposal—it was combated for some time, but at last, accepted;—and, to our unspeakable relief, the

languid lady and her assiduous escort, in a few minutes, departed together.

When they were gone, my mother sat down, and laughed so immoderately at the recollection of the whole scene, that I could not entirely forbear participating in her unexpected risibility. Yet, I anticipated consequences from what had passed, which she either did not, or would not, foresee. I felt assured, that, from this time, lady Earlsford would treasure up a decided antipathy to my father; would, possibly, influence others of her family to entertain unfriendly sentiments towards him; and would extend her own dislike, more or less, to every individual of our race! The worst of the business, too, was, that it admitted of no apology. How could the words "tragedy rant," be palliated or excused? The least allusion that should recall them to her memory, would only tend to rekindle her wrath, if it had become dormant, — to exasperate it anew, if it was beginning to subside. I hinted at these apprehensions, expecting that their justice would, in some degree, be allowed; but the

only effect which they produced upon my mother, was that of redoubling her mirth:

"That a quarrel" she cried "*a toute outrance*, such as you prognosticate, should arise between my dear, peaceable Sir Geoffry, and the only decidedly romantic, soft, heroine-like fine lady within fifty miles circumference, is so comical a violation of all probability, that I shall never be able to compose my countenance when I think of it! Why, it will be something akin to there being an inveterate feud between the lamb and the dove! I have not the least idea how your father will accommodate himself to the novel dignity of having an irascible character to support. The danger is, that he will forget his cue in three days' time, and should they chance to meet, will amble up to the lady, with an offer of his arm to lead her down to dinner, as if they were the best friends in the world! He may puff and strut to night; and cry pooh! and pshaw! as much as he pleases; but I defy him to bear malice for eight and forty hours together, against any human being!"

"But can we, my dear madam, rely with

equal confidence upon the speedy placability of lady Earlsford?"

"Except to herself, that is a matter of no moment," replied my mother. "Her rancour, if she chuses to harbour any, cannot possibly do Sir Geoffry the smallest injury. So much of 'the milk of human kindness' is known to abound in his composition, that, if she venture to speak harshly of him, she will be universally scouted. He has now lived several years upon this estate; he has rendered himself accessible to every description of persons; he has allowed himself to be cheated by the low; elbowed by the upstart; and teased by the litigious; yet has he never been seen with a frown upon his brow, nor ever been heard to address a petulant sentence to either boor, squire, man or woman. The deuce is in it, my dear Anne, if, after serving so long an apprenticeship to the art of governing his temper, he may not permit himself, for once, the indulgence of bouncing a little at a half-crazy Viscountess, without danger of incurring universal odium!"

I saw no use in pursuing the subject fur-

ther, and readily assented to my mother's proposal of joining the rest of the family in the library.

My father, when we entered the room, either was, or affected to be, exceedingly busy, looking over and arranging a number of papers, which lay upon the table before him. Blanch was quietly reading; Philippa copying some music, and Martha,—for want of better amusement, was gone to bed. The supper-tray stood at a little distance; and my mother, going up to it, and helping herself to a biscuit and a glass of wine, asked my father whether she might have the pleasure of pouring out one for him.

"It will cheer your spirits, my dear," added she, "which have seemed unusually depressed to-night."

My father took off his spectacles; and looking up with the most perfect good humour: "my dear," said he "pray use no ceremony. I fully expect a little castigation for my recent misdemeanor, and as I cannot but allow, that I sufficiently deserve it, I am entirely resigned to the neces-

sity of listening to the lecture which you, no doubt, are prepared to give me."

"Not I, in good truth, Sir Geoffry!"—I have, on the contrary, been parrying most ably the dismal forebodings of your daughter Anne, who, from the wholesome little *breeze* of this evening, anticipates the total blight and destruction of all the pretty little promising blossoms of friendship just beginning to expand between the three houses of Earlsford, Tourberville, and Stavordale: Now I have far different expectations; and flatter myself that, on hearing you have exerted sufficient spirit to reduce a fine lady—determined to *have her will or have her fits*—to the latter alternative, the farmers, and cottagers, and sportsmen, and other impertinents in this neighbourhood, who have so long taken advantage of the easiness of your temper, will learn to perceive that you are not so wholly divested of gall as they had imagined; and will begin,—dating from this memorable evening,—to hold you in higher respect than they ever have done before.—But now tell me, somebody,—what are the latest tidings from

Mr. Tremayne's room?—Who has been up to him within these last two hours?—Have you, Sir Geoffry?"

My father told her that he had; and gave as favourable a report as we could reasonably hope to hear.

Mr. Tremayne has now been here five or six days; and this evening we have heard better accounts of his approach to amendment than any which we had hitherto received. The fact is, that the fever has run exceedingly high, and that he has been very seriously ill. Sir Reginald sent, the day after the accident, for additional advice; and Mr. Crosby was sufficiently alarmed to be quite content that it should be so. Lady Earlsford, meanwhile, gained her point, the morning subsequent to her visit here; but she gained it not without restrictions. The baronet insisted upon going with her into the patient's room, to prevent what he termed, *a scene;* and her stay was limited to ten minutes. Still, having satisfied

'the sentiment,' she became afterwards more tractable; and her admission certainly did no harm; for Mr. Tremayne was hardly, I believe, sensible of her presence.—She now sees him daily; and, I am told, behaves with tolerable composure. Clavering, however, says, that she still would be better any where else; for that nothing can be more awkward than her occasional attempts to play the part of *nurse*. She mistakes one medicine for another, bringing him drops when he ought to take powders: if he asks for drink she gives it to him scalding hot; always forgets *which* arm was injured; takes every thing to the wrong side of the bed; hurts him, when she means to assist him in sitting up; and, as Clavering expresses it, *fidgets* about him so much more than is necessary, that "were she any body but his mother, ma'am, I do think, I should be apt to turn her out of the room and lock the door."

My father and the angry Viscountess have but once been in the presence of each other, since their extraordinary *fracas*. On his part the meeting was, as my mother pro-

phesied, amicable and unembarrassed. The truth is, he had dismissed from his mind all recollection of the affair; or rather, he thought of it only in the light of a momentary flash of impatience unworthy to be seriously dwelt upon. Lady Earlsford, it was evident, considered it in a far different point of view. She was stiff in her behaviour towards him, and laconic in her speech; and, I must say, considerably cooler towards us all, than I had ever seen her before. So far as regards my mother, my sisters, and myself, I permit and forgive this change; but (knowing as she does, through the medium of Sir Reginald, the obligations she is under to her) ought she thus to treat poor Blanch? How superficial, I fear, is the sensibility to which she makes such high pretensions! This morning, she brought with her Miss Tourberville, and, whilst she was in Mr. Tremayne's room, left her upon our hands for above two hours. On coming down again, she found her young favourite seated on the carpet, patting and coaxing, and making prodigious lamentations over a little kitten, which her aunt's coach-dog had been chasing round

the lawn, and which she had *heroically* jumped out of a ground-floor window to rescue and protect. The praises and caresses which were bestowed upon her for this act of unparalleled humanity, were, at once, ludicrous and provoking. There sat Blanch (her hand still bound up) almost unnoticed and unspoken to—and she had saved the life of lady Earlsford's son; while on the opposite side of the window sat Jane Tourberville, receiving kisses and applause for saving—what?—a kitten from being hunted up a tree!

Philippa begins to find at the end of nearly a week, our plan of totally excluding company, on Mr. Tremayne's account, intolerably dull; and to-morrow she goes to spend a few days with her friend Mrs. Talbot, to vary the scene; and, as my mother is pleased to say, to try her powers of captivation over young Villiers, Mrs. Talbot's nephew. There may, perhaps, be some justice in the supposition; for Philippa's rage for conquest is insatiable; but, I am firmly persuaded, that

she would not have left home, had Mr. Tremayne's recovery been farther advanced, or had there been, at present, any chance of his removing into the dressing-room, and admitting the congratulatory visits of the female part of the family. As it is, her confining herself at Hazleford can answer no purpose worth the sacrifice of a pleasant invitation; and Philippa is one who never hesitates (where the interest of her vanity is not at stake) to release herself as soon as possible from every thing which she dislikes.

Meanwhile, the cordial gratitude of Sir Reginald towards us all, seems rather to increase than to diminish with each returning day. He spends much of his time here, and makes his presence so agreeable, that we are always gratified when he arrives and loth to see him depart. Blanch holds, evidently, the first place in his good graces; but he is kind, ingratiating, and attentive to every body, including even Martha, who, habitually as she is overlooked by guests and strangers, obtains, to her utter surprise, more notice from the proud Sir Reginald Tourberville than she ever received from any other visitor.

Such a phenomenon has put her upon her very best behaviour; and she smiles, and holds up her head, and studies to be obliging, and looks more alert and good-tempered than we can any of us remember her having been before.

Mr. Westcroft, almost the only neighbour we have lately seen, is here very frequently, and has been admitted several times into the invalid's room. He pronounces him to be now decidedly convalescent, and delights in trying to frighten Blanch with predictions of the fine stage-effect that will result from the overflowings of Mr. Tremayne's gratitude, when he is first permitted to behold his fair preserver!

"As he is fully apprized, fair Blanch, of all he owes you; and, as he also knows how maimed and lamed those beautiful little white hands of yours have been in his service, he is conscious that, to attempt to kiss them would only put you to pain; so he means to throw himself prostrate before you, and (in the Papal form of salutation) humbly and reverently to kiss your toe. Then, slowly raising his eyes, he will pour from them a flood of

tears, in commemoration of the flood from which you rescued him; he will promise and vow to be your true knight through life, and"——

"He will pledge himself," interrupted Blanch, "never to venture again upon a crazy-looking wooden bridge!"

"Why, yes; I dare say that may form a part of his oration.—But do you know, that, after all, it was no more than your bounden duty to exert yourself for his deliverance, since you and your aunt were the sole causes of his rashness!"

"Indeed!—Pray inform us in what way that came to pass."

"You pretend, then, to know nothing of the matter?"

"I never pretend; I only speak the plain and simple truth."

"Then, be it my province to point out to you the unintentional error of your ways, in order to put you on your guard against falling into a repetition of similar misdeeds. —Mr. Tremayne was walking his horse quietly along the further bank of the noisy little torrent at the extremity of your grand-

father's grounds;—he might have been thinking of Dryads or Naiäds—of sylvan shades or crystal streams;—he might have been meditating some harmless Eclogue, which nobody but himself, in these tasteless days, would have had patience to read,—or he might have been humming a tune and patting his nag, and resting his mind from the labour of thinking at all. However this might be, certain it is, that he was wandering on his way securely and rationally, when, lo! he espied two nymphs on the opposite margin of the rivulet, who put all his calmness to flight, and urged him, at every hazard, to pursue the nearest and shortest road that would conduct him towards them. Wherefore, he forced his way through the brambles and underwood, arrived at the foot of the bridge, looked at its equivocal condition with some surprise, paused a moment, rather undecided whether to proceed or draw back—caught another glimpse of the fatal nymphs,—advanced, and—you know what followed!"

"Yes;—but I know not, the least in the world, where *our* share of the blame lies!"

"Ah, my pretty Blanch! you are a rogue,

after all!—You want, I see, to be gratified by hearing, in plain terms, that it was owing to poor Tremayne's impatience to join you, that the whole mischief occurred!"

"No:" said Blanch, with the frankest *naïveté*, "I do not want to be told *that*; for I suspected it before!—But I want to be told, how *we* can deserve censure for another's impatience."

"Why, the fault of which you were guilty (and a very heinous one it is), was that of stationing yourselves, like the syrens of antiquity, in a spot which could only be approached by the passengers whom you enticed, at the imminent peril of their lives."

"Oh, then, the moral of your discourse is, that young ladies ought not to seat themselves near an old bridge, whilst young gentlemen are so impetuous and desperate!—Very well;—I will endeavour to profit by the admonition; and, meanwhile, my aunt and I may renew our visits to the glen, as I hear that grandpapa has ordered all that Mr. Tremayne and his horse left of the poor bridge to be pulled down.—I am really sorry for it; because with so huge a gap in its side,

there could not be the least danger that any body else would venture upon it; and its fragments would have still a good effect in the landscape."

"Cannot you persuade Sir Geoffrey to construct another?"

"Merely for us to look at? Oh, no; he might very justly tell me, that a structure so long disused, requires no replacing for any purpose of utility; and, I am sure, he would be very loth to re-edify it for the sole purpose of ornament."

This conversation was terminated, on the entrance of Philippa, by a request from Mr. Westcroft for a little music. I objected, at first, to his being gratified, from an apprehension that, as we were sitting in the dressing-room, which so nearly adjoins Mr. Tremayne's apartment, and the evening was far advanced, the sound might disturb him. But Mr. Westcroft laughed at the idea: "The poor fellow broke his arm," cried he, "but he did not fracture his skull! He has not any fever now, and therefore, you may depend upon it, music will occasion no painful vibration in his reuniting limb."

I yielded to this argument, taking the precaution, however, of closing the sashed door which opens to a balcony running along that side of the house, and therefore, connecting with Mr. Tremayne's chamber, as well as with the room we were in. Philippa did not seem to approve much of the pains I was taking to exclude her voice from the sick man's ears: she complained, that I was making the room insupportably *close;* and accused me of being such an enemy to fresh air, that I was always ready to sieze upon any pretext to shut doors and windows. I let her say whatever she pleased, without even pleading,—as I might have done—in my own vindication—that it was beginning to rain, and that the night was becoming windy, dark, and chill. Mr. Westcroft, meanwhile, placed the music-stool ready for her; examined the books that were upon the instrument; and espying one of his favourite *duets*, begged that she would let him hear her sing it with Blanch:

"We never," said Philippa, in pursuance of the resolution to which she has inflexibly adhered, from the day when Sir Reginald

Tourberville and his sister first dined here—"We never sing together."

"No! that is odd. But come, then, I hope that you will each sing separately. Who begins first?

I recommended that Blanch should; as I thought it probable that my mother would very soon send for her down stairs to read Italian, as usual, for half an hour before supper. The motive qualified the precedence thus assigned to her; and Philippa consented to accompany her song, knowing that her wrist was not yet strong enough to enable her to accomplish that part of the undertaking herself. Blanch's performance was enchanting, for hers is not a *shew-off* character; and she seems as desirous to please a single auditor, as to attract the admiration of a numerous company. She likes Mr. Westcroft, too; and that, no doubt, gave additional *stimulus* to her wish of gratifying him. Whatever, in short, might be the reason, certain it is, that I have seldom heard her sing with more energy, taste, and expression. Her voice was in admirable order; and as flexible as it was

brilliant and clear; and of her style—so pure, so genuine, so completely the produce of a good school, it is impossible to say too much! Mr. Westcroft, who has rarely had an opportunity of hearing her, and who is thoroughly competent, both from high cultivation of taste and natural delicacy of ear, to appreciate the powers with which she is gifted, appeared to be so deeply and seriously impressed by their excellence, that when she paused, he could find no language adequate to the expression of his feelings; but, drawing a long breath, (the first, almost, which he had freely allowed himself to inhale since she began) sat down, and in an under voice murmured out, in the words of Garrick, I believe upon a somewhat similar occasion: "*This is corn, wine, and oil!* This is too exquisite for any thanks with which *I* can repay it!"

Whilst he was speaking, Blanch, who had been led, by the flaring of the candles, to observe that the wind, as she supposed, had removed the sashed-door, advanced towards the balcony to close it more securely; previously to doing which, however, she stepped

out, to look at the appearance of the night, and I then lost sight of her; but great was my surprise, when, the next moment, I heard her utter a hasty exclamation, and, immediately after, distinguished the suppressed tones of a second speaker. Philippa was flourishing over the keys; and all this was lost upon *her*, as well as upon Mr. Westcroft, who sat close to the instrument. I was stationed nearer to the sashed-door, and, indeed, was the only one who had attended to Blanch's *exit*. Finding that she had a companion, I began to be seized with some desire to go out and look at the weather also! and accordingly I arose and followed her. By the faint light afforded from the distant candles burning within the room, I indistinctly discerned a tall figure, clad in a long dressing-gown, and standing between the windows where there was the greatest extent of shade, in earnest parley with Blanch, whose hand he held, and, ere my vicinity was perceived, raised repeatedly to his lips! I guessed at once, whom this gallant eaves-dropper must be; but was at some loss how to make him sensible that I

was so near. Blanch descried me before I could summon courage to speak, and withdrawing her hand, laughingly, said to the tall figure by whom it had been detained:

"You will be scolded now as you deserve! Here is my aunt: what will *she* say, do you think, to your standing here in the wind and rain, to frighten me almost out of my wits, and to take your death of cold?"

"Indeed, Mr. Tremayne," cried I, "this is not the sort of evening which, in prudence, you ought to have chosen, for making your first sally from a sick chamber! Pray, go back; or else come with us into the dressing-room."

"No, no," answered he, "I am not in a *costume* to appear in a well-lighted apartment, before ladies. A voice drew me hither, whose delicious tone, reaching me but imperfectly as I sat at my open window, tempted me to venture where I might catch its accents more distinctly. Who could have resisted its magical attraction? Above all, who could expect *me* to resist it? With every feeling awake of boundless and inter-

minable gratitude towards the lovely musician,—with an anxiety to behold her"—

"Hush, hush," interrupted Blanch, "you will leave yourself nothing to say when we meet in the presence of Mr. Westcroft; and that would be really a pity, considering how well you seem prepared to justify his predictions of the fine speeches you would address to me. Good night, good night; I will not be the cause of detaining you here another instant!"

She gaily kissed her hand to him, and tripped back into the dressing-room.

"Enchanting creature!" exclaimed he, gazing after her a moment, and then (urged anew by my remonstrances) disappearing in turn. His window was upon a line with the glass door near which I stood; I saw him enter it,—heard him pull it down—and, the next minute, quitted the balcony myself.

Mr. Westcroft and Philippa I found precisely where I had left them: Blanch, they told me, was gone down to my mother; and their countenances assured me that they knew nothing of the recent interview. I felt no

inclination to be their first informant; but when Mr. Westcroft took leave, and Philippa repaired to her own room to pack up for her impending visit, I went down for the purpose of ascertaining what plan Blanch had pursued with respect to giving intelligence to my mother on the subject. "She is not," I internally argued, "addicted to mystery in general; and if on the present occasion, her reserve extends to all in the house whom she can hold in ignorance, it will be a proof that she attaches more weight to what Mr. Tremayne may have said to her, during their transient, and unpremeditated meeting, than, from her light and playful manner at the time, I should have been induced to expect."

But nothing was further from Blanch's mind, than any idea of making a secret to my mother of what had passed. I found them in full conference upon the subject; and it soon struck me, that her only motive for going through the dressing-room without mentioning the circumstances, was the fear of giving umbrage to the vanity of Philippa, who, she probably thought, would feel mor-

tified on hearing that Mr. Tremayne had deemed any singing but her own worth emerging into the damp night-air to listen to.

My mother was much amused by the little history to which she had been attending; and, on my entrance, called out: "So Anne;—You are no friend to noctural *tête-à-têtes*, I find!—You have been breaking up a very interesting colloquy, and acting the part of a rigorous duenna to the utmost perfection!"

"Has Blanch," said I, smiling, "lodged this heavy charge against me?"

"No, no;—she affects to be mighty glad that you interposed your authority to drive the poor prisoner back to his den. I must say, that I think his case a little hard. Here is between sick and well, in a house full of females, some of whom possess the sort of talents best calculated to chase the languor of indisposition; and because he is young, (for were it his uncle who had taken refuge here with broken bones, the whole family would have flocked around him as soon as he was able to bear society), because poor Tremayne is young, and cannot yet resume

his customary dress, and is forced, during great part of the day to recline upon a sofa, nobody is to go near him but his troublesome mamma, his uncle, Sir Geoffry, and my venerable self, Goody Crosby and the worthy Clavering (perhaps the most amusing personage of the whole set; for he encourages her to chatter to him as freely as an Irish nurse does to her foster child:) but all the rest of the female tribe keep studiously aloof from him; and from day to day he hears no voice that has not contracted somewhat of the crack of age; not sees a brow unfurrowed by a wrinkle.—Who then can wonder that he should hover, like a dissatisfied ghost, round the scenes and objects which contributed to his past amusement?"

"We did not wonder, grandmamma," cried Blanch, "for we know that, just at present he has nothing upon earth else to do; but it was our duty—at least I thought it was mine—to remonstrate against his chusing for his lurking-place, and lurking hour, so exposed a situation, and so unfavourable a time of the evening. Though as dissatisfied as any ghost upon record, yet, as he is no ghost

in any thing else, there was some chance, you will allow, that he might suffer corporally as much as he has done intellectually; and, after all, a fit of the rheumatism must be quite as bad as a fit of *ennui*. But why does he not read to amuse himself?"

"Nonsense, child!—Can a man debilitated by recent fever,—often in pain, and depressed by unusual confinement, can he sit poring, the whole day long, with aching eyes and head, over a book?—He *does* read, however, a great deal: but it is unreasonable to sentence him to do nothing else."

"Well, dear grandmamma," resumed Blanch, laughing, "if the society of ladies be so indispensable to his comfort, we will all, with your sanction, and under your guidance, establish ourselves in his apartment to-morrow, and devote ourselves exclusively to the task of entertaining him. Aunt Anne shall exhibit to him her drawings; or, (which would be better still) read to him select portions of a certain JOURNAL which I suspect she keeps, and of which I often long to get a sight. Aunt Philippa, who will not go to Mrs. Talbot's till two or three

o'clock, shall play and sing to him; and I will sing too; and if he should begin to nod, will sooth him with soft lullabies into a sound sleep. And aunt Martha shall carve his chicken for him at his early dinner; feed him gingerly, as you would a sick child; spread his bread-pudding upon a plate to cool; mix his wine and water; and make herself as handy and as useful as if she were waiting upon her dear Sir Reginald himself! Will not all this do, grandmamma, to prove our compassionate dispositions, and to pacify the dissatisfied ghost."

"I like your plan (with a few *saves* and *excepts*) exceedingly. The bread-pudding and the chicken might, to be sure, be in better hands; but we will provide for the reformation of that part of the scheme, and add a few *items* for its improvement in other respects; and then apply it to practice as speedily as possible. And so now, my dear, read me half a dozen stanzas of Tasso's third canto."

When we were going down to breakfast this morning, Blanch and I met Clavering upon the stairs, carrying a tea-equipage up to Mr. Tremayne's room. I stopped her, to enquire how he did. "Why, not so well, ma'am, as he has been for the last three or four days," answered she: "he has had a restless night, and this morning is full of cold. But I know what it is all owing to. I went into his room yesterday evening, just as he was climbing in at the window from that nasty unsheltered balcony; and his clothes were so damp, that I am sure he must have been standing out in the rain a full quarter of an hour! And what provoked me, was, that he looked as delighted and as full of spirits, as if he had been doing the cleverest thing in the world!"

"And did he tell you what could have been his inducement to stand upon the balcony in such weather, and at such an hour?"

"No, ma'am; I could not get the truth out of him, though I tried very hard for it, too; but his man was in the room; and being something of a foreigner, like myself,

he has a little smattering both of French and Italian; so there was no speaking without his understanding every word that one said."

"And pray, my dear Clavering," cried Blanch, somewhat incredulously, "will Mr. Tremayne talk to you, whom he has known scarcely more than a week, more openly than to a servant who may have lived with him three or four years?"

"Indeed will he, Miss Blanch; and many other gentlemen would do the same, if their own servant was a young harum scarum man like Wilson, and their nurse a steady elderly woman like me. Mr. Tremayne, I assure you, talks as freely and as condescendingly when he is alone with me, as you would do yourself; and I make no doubt that, at the first asking for, if Wilson is out of the way, he will tell me this morning all I want to know."

"Well," said Blanch, highly amused, "go and try, Clavering!—And be sure you come and let me know every thing you hear."

Clavering laughed, and shook her head,

and we left her to proceed on her way with her tea-making apparatus, and passed on to the breakfast-room.

My mother had already heard from Wilson the unsatisfactory report from his master's room, and was so anxious that Mr. Crosby should call before Sir Reginald made his daily visit, that she had sent the valet to that gentleman's house, to beg him to anticipate his usual hour of attendance. Meanwhile, all references to the supposed cause of this return of indisposition were avoided in the presence of Philippa and Martha; once, only, my mother, who looked, and I am certain, felt, sincerely vexed, could not forbear saying to me, in a low voice: "I hate balconies almost as much as tumble down bridges!"

Mr. Crosby delayed not an instant, after receiving my mother's summons, his arrival at our house. He went straight up to his patient's room; and on his coming down again, my father met him at the parlour door: "Well, Sir, how is Mr. Tremayne?"

"Why, we are not quite so well as we were yesterday; but I trust there is nothing

materially wrong. The predominant symptoms do not indicate much return of fever, and our spirits are remarkably good. The little draw-back of the present moment, strange as it may seem, shut up as we have lately been—seems to arise from a cold—a common, but somewhat heavy cold in the head and limbs. It is impossible, in this moist and variable climate, to prevent the vicissitudes of the atmosphere from penetrating into the best defended rooms. Yours is a very compact and well-constructed house, Sir Geoffry, and yet Mr. Tremayne, sitting in his own apartment, has caught, to all intents and purposes, as severe a cold, as if he had been exposed to all the bad weather that we had last night."

"The man," whispered my mother, "is a wizard!"

"At all events," answered I, "he has more penetration, and is less of a quack, than any village practitioner I ever met with."

Poor Blanch looked much concerned at having been, however innocently, the cause of this seizure; but Mr. Crosby's parting

speech, professional as it was, gave both to her and me considerable comfort:

"When Sir Reginald comes," said he, "may I request you, Lady Stavordale, to tell him, that I have already been here once, and mean to call again in the course of the day? Tell him also, that there is nothing about which to be seriously uneasy: our pulse is a little hurried; but we have no cough; and here is a fine, warm, clear day; my barometer too foretells a succession of dry weather, and I make no doubt that we shall very soon go on again admirably. Good morning to you, my lady; good morning, Sir Geoffry; young ladies, your most obedient." And away went our *quizzical*, but worthy little Galen.

The alarm we were under two days ago, I rejoice to say, has passed off even more speedily than Mr. Crosby's cheering prognostics had taught us to expect. Our invalid guest was forced, no doubt, to submit at first to certain restrictions which accorded

extremely ill with his wishes; amongst which, the positive prohibition to leave his room was by far the most irksome. To lady Earlsford and his uncle he made so very light of his attack, and conversed with them both in a strain of vivacity so unexpected, that they went away themselves, in a more cheerful state of mind about him, than they have yet been in, since the beginning of his illness. In the evening, when my Mother went to see him, I, for the first time, accompanied her. He coloured on perceiving me; and a conscious smile stole over his face; to which I could not entirely forbear a correspondent simper. Nothing however was said of the meeting of the preceding evening, though the name of Blanch was repeatedly brought forward by him; and her image, I am certain, was continually uppermost in his thoughts. He looked pale; and (as might be expected from the strict regimen to which he has been condemned), much thinner than when I last saw him; but he declared himself to be now almost entirely relieved from pain; and was sanguine in his hopes of speedy and perfect recovery. We did not

remain with him long; as my mother said, that she could not in conscience flatter him that his cold had at all conduced to the improvement of his appearance. "Your eyes," she cried, "are as heavy as lead; your voice is as husky as a raven's—and, if you would but allow it, your bones, I dare say, are aching as if you had been soundly cudgelled!—Now, in such a state, a much better thing than struggling to *faire l'agréable* to ladies, would be '*a good soft pillow for that throbbing head!*' So, most sincerely wishing you better, I prudently take my leave."

He saw us depart with evident regret; and, as I was following my mother out of the room, delayed me a moment, by still retaining the hand which I had extended to him when rising to go away, and said, in a most insinuating tone of voice:

"You will do me the honour, I trust, to repeat this charitable visit? The ice being now a little thawed, do not, I beseech you, let it accumulate and congeal again!"

I promised to look in upon him the next day; exhorted him (casting a glance toward

the balcony window) to be patient and prudent, and quitted the room.

The next day (yesterday), soon after dinner, I sent Clavering to enquire whether he was then disposed to see me, or preferred (as he had had several visitors in the course of the morning,) appointing a later hour in the day for my admission? She brought me his answer in the garden, where I was strolling with Blanch: "Tell Miss Stavordale," he bade her say, "that the offer of a visit from *her* is a condescension of which I too well know the value, and have too fully experienced the rarity, to hazard, by the delay of a single moment in accepting it, the loss of the good-fortune that now appears to await me!"

"Does the petulant gentleman mean to insinuate by this message," said I, turning to Blanch, and half laughing; "that I have been acting the prude by not going to see him every day whilst he has been here under the hands of surgeons and doctors, nurses and apothecaries?"

"Perhaps he may," she answered, in the quietest tone imaginable; but with a very arch side-look directed towards Clavering,

who caught her meaning, and could not wholly repress an answering smile.

"Why, you impertinent people!" exclaimed I—"Do you then place me so decidedly upon the list of old women, that you think I may now bid defiance to all slander, and establish myself by the bed-side of a young man, as if I were his grandmother or his great aunt?

"He has not been confined to his bed since last Saturday," said Blanch; "and this is Wednesday."

"How is this Blanch?" cried I. "Were not you the first, a day or two ago, to laugh at the compassion which my mother expressed for him, when talking of the solitude to which he has been sentenced?"

"Yes; I laughed when Grandmamma gravely mentioned it as an apology for his standing at night in the rain, listening to music, by way of beguiling the weariness of confinement!—If he had not done that, he might now have been walking about with us here in the garden. Go to him my dear aunt, and tell him so; and bid him beware how he plays such tricks again; since he may be as-

sured that no mistaken notions of humanity will ever induce *you*, at least, to break through the rules of decorum, in order to alleviate the seclusion of a young man's sick chamber!"

So saying, she ran off, as if frightened at her own sauciness: and left me to proceed to the apartment of Mr. Tremayne, a little doubtful of the strict necessity that had existed to keep away from it during so large a portion of his illness.

He received me with every appearance of gratitude and pleasure; and, to make up for past deficiencies, I sat with him full two hours. He was inexhaustible upon the subject of his "extraordinary obligations" to our whole family; but, I remarked, never failed, during their enumeration, to place Blanch at the head of those to whom he owed the most fervent acknowledgments; and, certainly, he was very right. I encouraged him, however, as little as possible, to prolong the theme. It would be foolish and indelicate in any of her own friends to magnify the merit of her conduct; let it

speak for itself. There is no fear of its being too lightly estimated by Mr. Tremayne.

When I could detach him from the topic of his "uncancellable debt" to us all, I led him to range through a wider and more general circle of conversation; and we talked of books, foreign countries, picture-galleries, public news, and five hundred things besides; including almost every customary subject of discourse, *scandal* alone excepted. I found him highly informed; nice, and somewhat fastidious in his taste (but, nevertheless, candid and impartial); energetic in the praise of real excellence; full of honourable and manly principle; and stored with copiousness of ideas, united to great firmness and rectitude of understanding, which could not fail, at any age, or in any rank, to attract admiration and respect. I felt, whilst I was conversing with him, that I was, at once, acquiring instruction, and enjoying the highest species of amusement: and when, at length, I tore myself away, I was more than half in love with him!—Well may Sir Reginald (himself a cultivated and discerning man) value, as he does, this richly-gifted nephew.

When I descended to the sitting-room, Blanch, looking up from my mother's work-frame, at which she had established herself, and fixing her laughing eyes upon me, said, "Well, dear aunt, *il n'y a que la premier pas qui coute!*—You have made Mr. Tremayne noble amends for all your preceding rigour.—What sort of companion does he prove?"

With affected hesitation, I answered:—"Why—I hardly know:—a very tolerable one, I think."

"And that was all, was it?—How good of you, then, to sit two hours and a half in his room talking with as much animation as if he had been the liveliest and most intelligent associate in the world!"

"How do you know, my dear Blanch, in what way I talked?"

Oh, grandmamma and I heard you under his window!—We could not make out what your dialogue was about; but really it seemed to be carried on with wonderful spirit."

I refused to afford any gratification to her curiosity; and Blanch, who even in jest, is

never importunate, soon gave up the point, and talked of other things.

Yesterday morning, just as we had taken our places at the breakfast-table, the room-door was gently opened, and, as if fearing to be driven up stairs again, Mr. Tremayne cautiously made his appearance. My mother started from her chair, with an ejaculation of surprise and pleasure, and hastened forward to welcome him. We all rose up, and in different ways, attempted to express our satisfaction in beholding him. He had cast off the vesture of a sick man, and wore his usual dress, with no other symbol of indisposition than the sling that supported his arm, and the general air of weakness and languor which, though not observable when he first entered, betrayed itself very visibly when he had been some time seated;—yet, neither in his eyes nor voice:—the former flashed with joy—the latter was attuned to a degree of happiness which seemed to know no drawback. I never saw a man in whom

renovated spirits and animation contended more vigorously against the remaining evidences of illness.—He said himself that his feelings might be compared with those of an emancipated spirit just emerged from purgatory into paradise! "I never," added he, "bore sickness and confinement so repiningly as—with shame I speak it—on the recent occasion. The contrast between the solitude of my own apartment and the society (actually under the same roof) to which I might have been admitted, but for the prohibitions which were so rigorously imposed upon me, was more melancholy—nay, at times more irritating than I have words to describe!—I assure you, lady Stavordale, that it is one of my most ardent wishes, never again to be laid up in a house where I have friends whom I am constantly pining to see, yet am debarred from the privilege of beholding.—You can have no idea of the misery of so tantalizing a situation!"

"As you represent it," said my mother, "no one but Tantalus himself could duly estimate its torments.—But really, the subject of complaint is a curious one! I have

heard of people who have bemoaned the misfortune of falling sick in a foreign country, and among strangers; but this is the first time I ever heard an ungrateful mortal lament over himself because his friends were too near him during illness!—The kindest thing, I suppose, that we could have all done, would have been to have quitted the house, leaving you to recover at your leisure in perfect loneliness!"

"I really do not know but it might. I certainly should have been less harassed by unavailing wishes, and incessant regrets!"

"Now positively," resumed my mother, "this thankless patient of ours talks of the neglect and desertion which he has experienced, in so tragical a manner, that were any stranger to overhear him, it would be supposed that he had never once seen the face of a single individual of the family, during the whole period of his indisposition!—Whereas, on the contrary, Sir Geoffry visited him every day; I exhibited my fair aspect in his apartment, almost as frequently; and Anne...."

"Was so agreeable and so friendly when she *did* honour me with her presence," in-

terrupted he, "that I will strive to *forget*, as I have already been generous enough to *forgive*,—her long avoidance!"

Then, addressing Blanch, who, when he entered, still wore a black ribbon round her wrist, which she had contrived, during breakfast, to twitch off unobserved, and throw under the table—he said:

"I miss, from that friendly arm of yours, the bandage which encircled it when I first came into the room. You were loth, perhaps, to expose to my view such a memento of what my rashness has made you suffer? But I really do not merit to be treated with so much consideration; and, therefore, I hope that, as a measure of precaution, you will immediately resume it."

Blanch, who had not a suspicion that the ribbon had been observed, and still less, that her motive for throwing it off could have been guessed, looked confused at the detection of her secret purpose, and 'blushed to find it fame.' She hastily replaced the bandage, without provoking any further remarks by affecting to deny the justice of what Mr. Tremayne had asserted.

When breakfast was over, he expressed an earnest desire to enjoy, once more, the luxury of being in the open air; and asked, whether any of our party would be charitable enough to accompany him during a short walk. My father expected a person upon business, and was obliged to excuse himself; but my mother, Blanch, and I agreed to attend him.

Martha had some crotchet of her own to pursue, in conjunction with the eldest Miss Paulet, with whom she had obtained permission to walk into the little town of Stockham, three miles off, to look at the cheap ribbons and gloves of a newly-opened haberdasher's shop.

The choice, in what direction we should walk, was left to Mr. Tremayne, who led us immediately to a side gate in the garden, opening to a little shady green lane, which, by an easy and scarcely perceptible ascent, conducts to a small common, beautifully dotted with clumps of venerable trees; animated by the appearance, here and there, of a detached cottage, and affording, from its comparative elevation, a very diversified,

though completely pastoral, view, of meadows and corn-fields, hills and vales, villages and farms, all glowing in the noon-tide sun.

The delight of our convalescent at every step he took; the frequent pauses which he made to gaze around him; the interest with which he surveyed both earth and sky; and lingered to inhale the fresh breath of Heaven, was really touching, as well as singular. My mother told him that she almost envied him an illness which had rendered him so alive to all the charms of nature, and so enchanted by his restoration to their enjoyment. He confessed, that he owed much of the spring and buoyancy of his present feelings to his recent privations;—"But not *all*," added he, expressively, and his eyes glanced round our party, as if to include the pleasure of being in such society amongst the principal causes of his happiness.

"You blend very successfully;" said my mother, smiling, "the courtier with the enthusiast. But let me try and recollect some lines—I believe they are Gray's, to which your circumstances and sensations at this moment bear a most remarkable affinity:

'See the wretch, who long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe, and walk again;
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The meanest flow'ret in the vale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him, are opening Paradise'."

"Admirable Gray!" exclaimed Mr. Tremayne, "He must have *felt*, ere he could have described so accurately the emotions awakened in an invalid by his first walk. But who has ever yet surpassed him in the power of speaking *to* and *from* the heart? Our earliest poetical rapture is awakened by his 'Elegy,' which combines, in so extraordinary a degree, the pathetic simplicity of language, and of images, calculated for the comprehension of the most youthful, with a dignified and philosophical strain of morality, which gives interest to its perusal at every stage of life."

"Was Gray, then," said I, "your first favourite?"

"Not of my infancy or mere childhood, certainly; but his 'Elegy written in a country Church-yard,' and his 'Ode on a pros-

pect of Eton College," were the productions I read with most delight when passing from boyhood to youth; and I can still read, or rather repeat them, with nearly equal pleasure. Who was your *first love* among the poets, Miss Stavordale?"

"Collins, I believe."

"And mine," cried my mother, "was Prior. It may now, perhaps, be old-fashioned to talk of him; but my age entitles me to that privilege; and I will venture to assert, that, for ease, playfulness, grace, and occasional elegance, Prior equals (I had almost said exceeds) any poet of this country."

Mr. Tremayne readily acknowledged his merits; and stated that he had known many excellent judges who spoke of him as partially as my mother. Then, turning to Blanch, he said: "And who—I will not say *was*, but *is*, your poetical *first love*.

"I have *two*," answered she, "as unlike each other as the age and people for whom they wrote; but both to me so charming, that I rove alternately from one to the other, and hardly desire to extend my acquaintance beyond them."

"I am afraid, however, you are somewhat of a *coquette*, even whilst boasting of your moderation. What right have you to *two* loves?"

"I belong to two countries:—may I not therefore permit myself to have a favourite in each? One, in honour of my paternal, and the other, of my maternal land?"

"And who are these favourites?"

"Shakspeare, and Metastasio. My aunt Philippa tells me that, because the style of the latter is easy, he is only read here by girls at school. That may be; but *I* read him, because he speaks to my heart; he interests, he animates me; he sometimes fills my eyes with tears; and sometimes elevates my imagination, by so nobly representing the spirit and dignity of real heroism. I cannot attend long to authors whose sentiments want clearness and simplicity, or who disdain to introduce some sort of *story* into their works."

"Do you make no exceptions to this rule?—For instance, in the case of Petrarch, would you not forgive his writing without a story!"

"Not very cordially!" answered she.

"It may be high treason to say so; but I am tired to death if I read more than one or two of his sonnets at a time. Some of them, indeed, I have liked well enough to learn by heart; and they always please, always charm me."

"And what say you to the gloomy sublimity of Dante?"

"I have merely a *hearsay* veneration for him. My dearest mother, who well understood, and warmly admired him herself, always advised me to avoid a premature and precipitate perusal of his works. She said that few very young readers could possibly do justice to his extraordinary genius; that the obscurity of his allusions, his antiquated words, and bitter personalities could not but perplex, and sometimes, perhaps disgust them; and all the finer parts of his poem, upon judges so hasty, inexperienced, and unformed, would be thrown away."

"She decided very wisely," said my mother, "I have often thought it absurd to put into young hands the elaborate and profound works of some of our *own* authors; yet few amongst them, I dare say, equal

Dante in difficulty. Akenside, however, is a pretty fair specimen of English abstruseness; and Akenside I have seen upon many a schoolroom table."

"Accompanied, I hope," said Mr. Tremayne, smiling, "by Milton and Young."

"Oh, they are baby-books in these enlightened days! Every *Miss* of eight years old can *recite* or *declaim*—(which ever you like best)—Satan's address to the sun, and the 'Sweet Harmonist' of Young."

"The misfortune of making these ill-timed selections for the exercise of children's memories," said I, "seems to be, that it destroys the gratification which, in after years, might have been derived from the perusal of productions so masterly, in all their freshness, and with minds prepared to understand and fully appreciate them."

"And yet," cried Mr. Tremayne, "how is it, that boys, whose first acquaintance with the Greek and Latin classics is made at school—and often by harsh and compulsory measures—turn out afterwards, in many instances, such fervent lovers of Greek and Roman literature?

"That can only be accounted for," answered my mother, "by supposing that whilst a boy is obtaining the grammatical knowledge requisite to enable him to read and construe a dead language, his mind (as Anne requires) is gradually preparing to comprehend the beauties of his author's ideas, as well as the exact meaning of his words. He does not, without any previous study, pounce upon the finest passages in Homer, and recite them glibly, in a language familiar to him, as girls repeat portions of Milton. He has been long trained; he has gone on step by step; he has risen from the lowest round of the ladder to the topmost, by slow and toilsome degrees; and this sort of progressive initiation must have given time for the development of his intellects, and the formation of his taste."

"I believe," said Mr. Tremayne, "that yours is a very just solution of the problem."

Fearful of allowing him to over-fatigue himself, we now proposed retracing our steps homeward. He immediately consented; but with a gratuitous acknowledgment of his motives for being so docile that

made us all laugh: "If my mother," cried he, "should call whilst I am absent, she would instantly take it for granted, that, being well enough to go out, I am also well enough to go back to Bovil-court, where the walks, according to her, would do me just as much good as those around Hazleford.—But I am very sure they would not!—And unless, my dear Lady Stavordale, you mean to sign the death-warrant of my returning strength and spirits, you will not condemn me to try any such hazardous change of air!"

We promised, if he behaved well, to let him enjoy our salubrious breezes as much longer as he might find them necessary for the entire re-establishment of his health; and soon after, with very little abatement of the vivacity with which he had set out, he again re-entered the house. My mother then recommended to him, for an hour or two, the perfect quiet of his own apartment; again, he was all submission, and retired without delay. There was something at first, wholly unintelligible to me in obedience so implicit, to counsels, which his ex-

traordinary eagerness to break from confinement had led me to expect he would so strenuously have opposed; but it soon occurred to me, that he might have a reason for it, in the apprehended objections of his mother to his remaining one hour longer under our roof than the most positive necessity required. *His* inclinations and *hers*, therefore being so diametrically opposite, it is not to be wondered at that he should, to avoid contention, think it prudent to abscond from the general sitting room till her visit was over; and I entertained not a doubt, that such would be his daily practice, as long as the faintest possibility remained of keeping up the character of an invalid. I mentioned my opinion to my mother; who, far from disputing its reasonableness, owned, that the same idea had occurred to herself: "But we have nothing to do," added she, "with the contrary views of the mother and son. His establishment here originated in no machinations of ours; nor is his prolonged abode among us the result of any persuasions which we have employed. Whilst he likes to continue with us, we

shall be happy to entertain him;—he is much too agreeable to be turned churlishly adrift;—and I really think, that he is old enough to be entitled to avail himself of the hospitality of a respectable family like ours, without asking his mother's permission. If she disapproves his doing so, the matter must be settled between themselves; we can do nothing in it, since it is neither our business to remove her disquiet, nor our wish to aggravate it."

Notwithstanding this representation of the case, I must own that when lady Earlsford called, and addressed to us, before she went up stairs, her customary enquiries after her son, I did not feel wholly satisfied with the partial information which she received. It was acknowledged that he was infinitely better; but not a word was said of his having been out—nor of his having been down to breakfast.—Such reservations I thought very degrading to us. Whatever may be Mr. Tremayne's reason for wishing to protract his departure, our accordance with it ought to be open and frank; and he himself ought to steer towards his object

with undissembling plainness. My mother, however, made it a point of honour not to betray what he had intimated a desire to conceal; and she soon expended a few angry words (almost the first she ever addressed to her) upon poor Blanch, for venturing to say, after lady Earlsford went up stairs:

"Mr. Tremayne is a shabby creature, for desiring to stay here at the expense of making us all contribute towards deceiving his mother!"

This was too true to be heard without displeasure; and Blanch received so sarcastic a reproof, that she quitted the room with tears in her eyes.

A long silence ensued between my mother and me, who were left alone, and who felt equally at a loss how to explain what was passing in our minds. At length, my mother, half seriously, half jestingly, exclaimed: "Hang the sturdy honesty of that little girl! she has deranged all my ideas! What business has the morality of sixteen to set itself up in opposition to that of sixty? The word 'deceive' sticks in my throat abominably! and the worst part of the matter is, that,

upon cool consideration, I am forced to allow, that the expression, odious as it is, is perfectly applicable to the case. What is to be done, daughter of mine?—Must I, when lady Earlsford comes down, humbly proceed to confession?"

"Yes;" said I, stoutly; "and attribute our previous silence to the right cause,—some whimsical fancy of Mr. Tremayne's.

"And what if this occasion a quarrel between mother and son?"

"They must make it up again at their best leisure; better run the risk of exciting a temporary quarrel between them, than allow a lasting imputation to attach to ourselves."

"Philippa would be worth a thousand of such counsellors!—She would laugh all these scruples to scorn!—But I will tell you, my worthy, downright Anne, what you shall do. Since you are such an advocate for plain dealing, you shall be spokeswoman yourself. I will go and write a letter in the library, and leave you to say whatever you think proper to clear our endangered reputations."

Accordingly, she retired; and I remained

alone to receive the Viscountess on her descent from her son's apartment.

Just as she was coming down, Sir Reginald Tourberville arrived.—They met in the hall, and entered together the room in which I was sitting.

The usual salutations of the day being ended, the Baronet, addressing us jointly, said: "Well, ladies, what is your account of Horace this morning?"

"I think," replied I, "that he may now almost venture exultingly to cry out: "Richard's himself again!"

"Indeed!—This is most happy intelligence! He has had a good night, then?"

"Yes,—and a good morning, and a good noon,"—then, turning to Lady Earlsford: "Does not your ladyship," added I, "find him astonishingly better?"

"I wished, at least, to persuade myself, from what I had heard before I went up, that he was so: but I own, that what I have seen of him does not give me quite so decided an opinion of his rapid amendment, as you, Miss Stavordale, entertain. He is stretched on the sofa; and, I thought, seem-

ed more disinclined to talk, and looked more wan and feeble than when I visited him yesterday."

"Oh, that is nothing!—He is tired; and my mother sent him up on purpose to lie down after his walk."

"His walk!" they both repeated. "Has he then been out?"

"Yes; and he bore the exertion remarkably well."

"I rejoice to hear it," cried Sir Reginald. "Nothing will brace him more, than going, in fine weather, like this, into the air."

"But how odd," observed the Viscountess, "that he should never have mentioned this walk to me!"

"He thought, probably, that *we* had informed you of it; and we left to *him* the pleasure of surprising your ladyship with the news."

"But did he go alone?—Did he go far?"

"No; he was well escorted, I assure you; and my mother took especial care that he should not overtask his strength."

"I then asked lady Earlsford to take some refreshment, and, on her declining it, slightly

invited her to stay and partake of our family dinner. This she also excused herself from doing; but said, that, as it was yet early, she would step up again for a few minutes to her son to congratulate him on the successful effort of the morning.

"No, no;" cried the Baronet;" let him alone for to-day. You say he looks fatigued; the best thing you can do, therefore, is to allow him to lie still and recruit himself. I know what the information of this walk of his has suggested to you; but there must be a little attention paid to *my* claims, lady Earlsford, as well as to your own wishes; and I beg leave to enter a timely protest against all unfair monopolies!"

"I do not understand you, brother."

"Then, I will more clearly explain myself. Finding that Horace is making strides so rapid towards recovery, you are anxious to get him to Bovil-Court again. That, I allow to be natural enough; but you must not dismiss from your recollection, the promise he is under, of spending a month with me, before I go into Norfolk. You know

that my journey is fixed for the latter end of October. We have now reached the middle of September: he has, consequently, very little more than barely time to fulfil his engagement; and must, for the present, give up all thoughts of attending you and *your fair niece.*"

These last words were uttered in an ironical tone, and with a contemptuous sneer, that seemed to fret Lady Earlsford to the very soul; "The accuracy of this statement being admitted," answered she, angrily, "*your grand-daughter* and I must, of course, reconcile ourselves, as well as we can, to the loss of Horace's society, till his visit to you has been paid; and, as you are so anxious for his company, I would recommend to you, to relieve this friendly family from their troublesome guest, as speedily as possible. The attention and kindness which have been shewn him, I can never forget; but it certainly becomes our duty not to impose such a charge upon them, one moment after he is able to bear a removal."

"I will settle this matter with Sir Geoffry and Lady Stavordale, to the satisfaction, I

trust, of all parties. But whilst I think of it, Lady Earlsford, let me announce to you, that I expect some visitors at Eastvale, amongst whom will be one upon whose affection I confidently rely for the most able and willing assistance in the task of nursing Horace into perfect health!"

"Whilst his mother is so nigh at hand, Sir Reginald, I think you need hardly have provided yourself with such an auxiliary!—But who is it that you mean?

"His father's sister,——Lady Horatia Tracy."

"Arrogant, insufferable woman! Is *she* coming to Eastvale?"

Sir Reginald's brow contracted; and a flush of sudden resentment overspreading his face, he sternly answered: "She is; and none but such as are disposed to witness her presence at Eastvale with pleasure, will themselves, during her abode there, be welcome guests to its master!"

Lady Earlsford forbore making any answer to this intimation; but turning to me, after a few moments silence, left her compliments for my mother, whom she

entreated me not to disturb, (I had apologized for her absence, by saying, that she was answering a letter by return post) and departed.

"I have looked forward," said Sir Reginald when she was gone, "with great impatience to the arrival of Lady Horatia, for some days past. She is one whom I am anxious to make known to you. You must suffer no prejudice against her (from what you have heard) to rest upon your mind. Certain dissimilarities of opinion, of taste, and of feeling, have estranged Lady Earlsford from her sister-in-law, without having effected, however, I am very sure, any diminution of the high respect, which she must necessarily entertain for her character and abilities. She is Tremayne's warmest, and most disinterested friend; I might almost say, admirer; and he looks up to her, as to the living image of his father, whom she strikingly resembles; and whose eminent qualities of mind, and sterling virtues of heart, survive, in her, more vigorously, than in any other of that father's kindred."

I expressed great satisfaction at the near

prospect of making so valuable an acquaintance; and asked, whether Mr. Tremayne was apprized of her impending visit.

"He knows not, yet, that the day is fixed for her arrival; but he has been aware, the whole summer, that I had obtained a promise from her to spend a few weeks with me, previous to its termination."

"Has Lady Horatia heardof her nephew's accident?"

"Yes; I wrote to her immediately; apprehensive that some exaggerated report might reach her, more alarming than the reality. 'In cases of illness, or of danger, from any other cause, I hold sincerity to be the truest test of friendship; and Lady Horatia, I well knew, devotedly attached as she is to Tremayne, had firmness of nerve—or rather, solidity of sense—to enable her to bear the truth. Had the event about to take place in her family, permitted her to follow the bent of her own inclinations, it is probable, that she would immediately have directed her course hither, to have shared, with the rest of his friends, the task of attending upon him; but her eldest daughter was on the

point of being married to a nobleman, newly appointed to an embassy at one of the northern-courts; and the bride was not only to accompany him abroad, but to embark with him the moment the nuptials were solemnized, in a government vessel, waiting only their arrival in order to set sail. The ceremony, therefore, could not be deferred, and Lady Horatia remained (as she always does) at the post which her principal duty prescribed her to fill. Yet, she confesses, that the heaviness of heart with which she attended her daughter's wedding,—knowing that from the altar she was instantly to be conveyed to a distant country, for an indefinite,—probably a protracted interval, was much increased by the remembrance of what her nephew was undergoing, and the utter impossibility of being with him during the severest period of his sufferings."

"She will now," said I, "receive the reward best suited to her feelings, for the laudable forbearance with which she abstained from coming to him, whilst another, and a superior claim, interfered with her wishes; she

will arrive only to witness the rapid progress of his recovery."

"But, my dear Miss Stavordale," resumed the Baronet, with a less serious aspect, "I do not quite understand how your report of this marvellous amendment can be made to tally with the account brought down, just now, by his mother!—Is the fellow playing a double game? Acting *sick* when we come, and performing *well* when we go away?"

I laughed, and said: "This, I assure you, is the first morning that he has had any such alternation in his power; but truth obliges me to confess, that I believe he did not, when lady Earlsford was here, make quite the *best* of his case!"

"Well," resumed the Baronet," if it was so, we must forgive him. My sister has been a fond, but teazing mother; and Horace, who, I am convinced, would sooner renounce his dearest wish than inflict upon her, (in any matter of real moment), serious pain may, now and then, in trifles, endeavour to evade compliance with her humours, by having recourse to a little *manœuvring*. I wonder not, believe me, at

his attachment to his present quarters; and am fully prepared to encounter some difficulties, myself, in getting him away from them; but I shall have a powerful coadjutrix, in lady Horatia."

At that moment, Mr. Tremayne, with no affectation of greater debility than still really lingered about him, entered the room. He walked straight up to his uncle, looking rejoiced to see him, and holding out to him the hand that was unconfined, gaily said: "congratulate me, my dear uncle,—for, like the air, I am now 'a chartered libertine,' free to rove wherever my inclination directs!"

The affectionate old Baronet warmly shook the hand which had been extended to him, not a little gratified, I make no doubt, at the distinction between this animated mode of address to himself, and the assumed languor with which his nephew had thought proper to receive the visit of lady Earlsford.

"I rejoice heartily, my dear Horace," cried he "at your enlargement! Use your *charter* soberly, however, and long, long may you preserve it!"

"Thank you, Sir; your good wishes, like

your good offices, I hope, will prosper. As to the sobriety you recommend, there can be but little merit, at present, in complying with the admonition; for though strong in spirit, I am hardly yet conscious of an equivalent degree of strength of muscle."

"I now left the two gentlemen to themselves, (after engaging Sir Reginald to spend the day with us) and repaired to my mother.

"Well, my dear Anne," she cried, "have you done all the dirty work for me, which I so shabbily deputed you to perform?"

I related to her, what had passed previous to the departure of lady Earlsford.

"Brava! bravissima!" she exclaimed.—"You repair my faults so well, that there may be some danger their number will increase!—But here is a note from our friend at Atherton, Mrs. Talbot, and a postscript by Philippa, addressed to you.—Read what they say."—

I did so; and found that the note contained a request, that my mother would allow Martha and Blanch to spend the following evening at Atherton, where Mrs. Talbot purposed assembling a few young people for

a little dance. Philippa's postscript related to some trinkets which she wished me to send to her, and directed me where to find. In a very small hand, and quite at the edge of the paper, was added: "I hope that you will not permit Blanch to sport amongst us, the *black badge of female chivalry* which she wore when I left home. She would be the ridicule of the whole room!—I am sorry, that her masculine expertness in rowing is so generally known."

"The spirit in which this little paragraph is written," said I, "plainly indicates that Philippa was no friend to the invitation; and I have my fears, that, if Blanch be allowed to accept it, some pains may be taken to make the evening anything rather than agreeable to her."

"No, no; Mrs. Talbot would provide against that. She is partial to Blanch; and she is, moreover, a woman of good breeding, who would allow no one under her roof, to experience unpleasant treatment."

"You mean then, to send the poor girl, unaccompanied by any better *chaperon* than Martha?"

"I mean to let her decide for herself. If she likes to go, I see not the objections to it, which you have conjured up; and Martha will be irreconcilable, if detained at home on account of any scruples we may have about sending Blanch."

"Probably the Paulets have been asked; in that case, Martha might go with them."

"And, in that case, Blanch would cease to be wholly dependent upon Martha for support.—Say no more about it, Anne:—if the child enjoys the thoughts of the party, there can be no reasonable motive for preventing her attending it."

I was silenced; and retreated to my own room to dress for dinner.

When we were all assembled in the drawing room, previous to receiving the Butler's summons to table, Sir Reginald, who seldom, when Blanch is present, can long detach his eyes from her, observed, after a short inspection, that she wore not her usual festivity of aspect; but seemed depressed; and unwilling to join the circle: "She looks," added he, in a low voice to my mother, "like a young penitent, just returned from the con-

fessional of a rigid ghostly father, who has condemned her, by way of expiation, to move about with downcast eyes, and scarcely to raise her voice above a whisper.—What a lovely representative of an humble novice she would at this moment make!"

My mother looked at her a moment; and catching her eye, smiled, and held out her hand, saying: "Is this subdued countenance, my poor little girl, the effect of my meritorious lecture upon the subject of applying unhandsome epithets to honourable young gentlemen?"

Blanch coloured; but resuming her cheerfulness at the sight of my mother's smile, answered: "If I am not *really* out of favour with you for what I said, dear Grandmamma, I do not mind having had the lecture a little—wrongfully!—It will do for something else;—and I dare say, I shall soon deserve it!"

"An excellent way of forestalling the penalty of your next offence!—But, before we dismiss the subject, I beg you to understand that no one has gone away from hence to-day *deceived*. The matter in question was fully

explained by your aunt, to the person it concerned; and she and I have now as good a right to think ourselves honest as yourself! —There, go and sit down by Martha; and endeavour to get that Review from her, which she is so aukwardly cutting open.—Ah! I thought so! she has made a rent of an inch long, in the very leaf which she is now turning over!"

Sir Reginald was extremely inquisitive as to the *unhandsome epithets*, and the *honourable young men* he had heard alluded to; and whilst my mother was giving him a ludicrous explanation of the matter, Mr. Tremayne drew a chair next to Blanch, and began, though with more circumspection, an interrogatory somewhat similar: "I am shocked to find," cried he, "that you have the misfortune to include amongst the gentlemen of your acquaintance, any who are capable of provoking you to speak of them with harshness! Have I ever seen the unadvised person in question?"

Blanch kept her eyes fixed upon the book, which Martha chose to persevere in hacking

open, and remained silent.—Mr. Tremayne went on:

"This," said he, "is not a district very fertile in young men. Do you class Mr. Westcroft among the number? Your silence leaves me in some doubt; but I will suppose he was not the offender:—Mr. Lloyd?—still mute. My brother?—you hardly think him old enough to deserve your severity.—Whom else can I name?"

He paused a moment; but obtaining neither look nor answer, presently added: "I begin to be sorely apprehensive, that *I* am the involuntary and unconscious culprit!—Tell me so, if my conjecture is right; and tell me how to re-establish myself in your opinion."

"Your conduct," said Blanch, at length breaking silence, and turning towards him her half admonitory, half relenting face, "Your conduct must always be as frank as your looks!"

"And in what instance have I been unhappy enough to give you reason to think it otherwise?"

Blanch looked at me, as if doubtful, whether she might, with propriety, say any thing more. I nodded; and thus encouraged, she proceeded:

"You laid us, in some degree under the necessity, when lady Earlsford came this morning, of misleading her as to the real progress of your recovery, by requiring us to conceal from her that you had been able to walk out. I felt ashamed of grandmamma's evasive manner of answering her enquiries; and I called you, I believe, a *shabby person!* Are you angry with me for having done so, and for venturing to own it?"

"Angry, charming Blanch! Can you suppose it possible? Though *my* conscience, I will acknowlege, is not quite so tender as I perceive yours to be, rest assured, that I honour you for dealing so ingenuously with me; and shall always feel grateful and happy when you condescend to admonish me."

"But not much benefited, I suspect?"

"In many cases, I have no doubt that I might be most essentially so; but in *all*—could you believe me sincere were I to assert it?—With regard to the circumstances of

this morning, I am truly sorry that they should have made a disadvantageous impression upon your mind; but I could not, without being now, much more of a *shabby person* than you thought me then, profess to regard them in the same light that you do.—And now," added he, "do not consider me as a totally hardened and incorrigible sinner, since you find that to make amends for not having been sufficiently frank with my mother this morning, I am this evening opposing my opinions to yours, with a freedom that would do honour to the stubbornest old republican!"

"Well," cried Blanch, rising to follow my mother and me down stairs, "I must leave you and your conscience, such as it is, Mr. Tremayne, to settle your own affairs.—Only this let me beg:—that when next you have any little clandestine devices to carry on, you will not make me, in the remotest degree, a party concerned in their execution."

"But meanwhile, tell me that you have forgiven what *has* passed; and that you will endeavour, in defiance of to-day's trespass,

to think me a very honest, plain-dealing man!"

"Just allow me to wait till I have seen one little instance of your title to be so considered, and I promise to take the general belief of the business for granted."

This was said in so playful and good-humoured a tone, that Mr. Tremayne, feeling convinced that she was now perfectly reconciled to him, could not forbear (seeing that I lingered a little behind to let down a window-blind) offering her his arm to conduct her to the dinner-room.

Blanch, certainly, has never enjoyed a happier, I might almost say, a more triumphant day, than every thing conspired to render the remaining hours of the present one. Seated at no great distance from Sir Reginald, and next to his nephew, she was an object of constant attraction to both. The rest of the party beheld her success with cordial delight; whilst she, conscious of the ascendancy which she had acquired, and glowing with modest pleasure, still retained a command so perfect over her spirits, and knew so well how to temper vivacity with

diffidence, that, dangerous as was the trial, I never saw her conduct herself with more unassuming softness and delicacy.

It was amusing to witness, at dessert, the address with which Mr. Tremayne contrived to engage her services for every thing that he wanted. Being unable to cut his own food, his servant, during dinner, had performed the office for him at the side-board; but when the cloth was withdrawn, he chose to depend wholly upon Blanch for further assistance. I really believe that his choice of fruit was regulated by the degree of aid which it would require to be prepared for him.

He accepted nothing that could be eaten without previous dividing, or paring; and, on all these occasions, he turned to her, with such looks of helpless entreaty, that it became nearly her sole employment to provide him with melon, or to break filberts and peel walnuts for him. Once or twice, I maliciously suggested, that he was selecting precisely such fruits as bore the character of being the least wholesome; and I offered him grapes, and recommended whatever else he might have managed without applying

for help; but my interference was (as I expected) of no avail; he declined every thing I presented to him; and seemed to take a pleasure, of which it was almost cruel to attempt depriving him, in being indebted entirely to his young neighbour for the little offices of kindness which his lameness gave him a pretext to solicit.

That the Baronet saw and understood what was passing, was as obvious, as that he sanctioned his nephew's growing attachment, and wished well to the prospect of its becoming reciprocal. When tea was over, after sitting some time in a recess of one of the drawing room windows, conversing in an under voice with my mother, Blanch (at his request, I have reason to suppose), was suddenly called upon to join them; and the old gentleman, with mingled gallantry and kindness, presented to her a narrow morocco-case, entreating, as he saw that she had now discarded from her wrist the bandage which her humanity had lately compelled her to wear, that she would permit him to substitute for it, in testimony of his never-ending gratitude and truest affection, the little offering which he had obtained

the consent of lady Stavordale to tender to her acceptance. Blanch, affected by the paternal regard indicated by the accents and looks of the venerable giver, and omitting to examine her new acquisition, seized his hand, and raising it to her lips, cried,—"What can I ever value so highly, or thank you for so gratefully, dear Sir Reginald, as the indulgence and favour which you have hitherto shewn me?"

The Baronet embraced her,—called her his child, his dear child;—and then resigning her to Martha, whose curiosity to behold the contents of the case, had induced her eagerly to approach, in order to hasten its inspection, he went up to my father, and invited him to engage in a game of picquet.

The present, when brought to the table, and produced to public view, proved to be truly magnificent. It consisted of a series of antique cameos, the most beautiful I have ever seen, richly set in chased gold, and adapted, at pleasure, by the addition of a few supernumerary gems, prepared for the purpose, to be worn either as a bracelet or necklace.

"Oh this," exclaimed Blanch, enchanted by a gift which her excellent taste taught her how to appreciate so justly—"this is *indeed* a treasure! How exquisite is the skill, the grace, and delicacy with which these heads are executed! See what beauty there is, my dear aunt, in the features of this young Bacchus!—and how much character and dignity in this fine profile of Minerva!—

"And what loveliness in that Muse!" interposed Mr. Tremayne. "I think I have seen a face which it resembles. Look at it, Miss Stavordale. I am anxious to know whether you will deem me a mere visionary, or perceive the likeness also."

I examined it very attentively; and soon discovered, that it indeed bore a striking similitude to the countenance of Blanch. He watched me through the progress of the inspection, and catching my eye when I looked up, seemed delighted by the confirmation which an assenting smile from me gave to his opinion. We neither of us, however, expressed our thoughts in words; and Blanch was too much engaged in contemplating the remaining beauties of her superb bracelet, to

ask any questions, or even perhaps, to know what had passed between us.

"Well, my dear Blanch," cried my mother, "I congratulate you on your elegant acquisition; and I have to tell you that, if you are ambitious of an opportunity to display it, to-morrow will afford you a very favourable one."

"I have already fixed in my own mind, grandmamma, the occasion on which I first mean to wear it; and that, I am very sure cannot occur so soon as to-morrow."

"And what is that occasion?"

With her accustomed openness, she was about to avow it, when some inexplicable scruple seized her,—brought a slight blush into her cheeks,—and compelled her to wave an explanation by saying:

"I shall, perhaps, change my purpose; so it may be as well not to tell it."

"My mother laughed; and then proceeded to inform her of Mrs. Talbot's invitation.

Mr. Tremayne, bending down as if to examine with her one of the gems, earnestly, though in a very low voice, said: "Oh, re-

member—it is my *last* evening—do not go, I implore you!"

She was silent a few moments; and then said, though without looking up: "Grandmamma, I had rather, if you please, decline this party."

"But *I* may go, I hope," cried Martha, anxiously.

"Are the Paulets invited?" enquired my mother.

"Yes, Fanny Paulet found a note from Mrs. Talbot when we came back from Stockham this morning."

"Then you may go with her. Your father's carriage shall take you both."

"Thank you Ma'am," said Martha; and, satisfied to have secured her own object, she let the matter rest.

When all had dispersed, but Mr. Tremayne and Blanch, from the table at which the Cameos had been exhibited, I heard him say to her, as I sat working at a little distance:

"*May* I thank you for having given up this party at Atherton, or—is it too presuming in me to suppose, that you renounced it with any reference to my wishes?"

"You ask," said Blanch, smiling, "what grandpapa, when talking politics, would call very leading questions!"

"Do I? But what answer have I to hope for?"

"None; I have declined the invitation; but my reasons I shall not communicate: and therefore, your thanks had better remain unpaid, for fear they should be ill-bestowed."

"I submit.—Yet, surely, I deserved—but no; I will be satisfied with the decision for its own merits; and not value the less a pleasant result, for being ignorant of its cause."

Still engrossed by the bracelet, she now asked him to assist her in divining for whom one of the heads was meant.

He looked at it,—evidently thinking of something else—named at random, the first heathen personage that occurred to him; and, as she was beginning an expostulation upon the improbability of his conjecture, he interrupted her to say:—

"I wish you would indulge me with the promise of one very simple—very easy favour."

"Not unheard; tell me to what the promise relates?"

"Do not wear those gems till the day that I am able to throw off this inglorious sling,—and allow no one to clasp them on for the first time, but me!"

Blanch looked at him with such surprise, that I saw, at once, he had proposed the exact epoch for her wearing the bracelet, on which she had already mentally determined; and the accidental coincidence of his request with her previous design, seemed to strike her as something marvellous! Her silent cogitations upon the subject lasted so long, that Mr. Tremayne, becoming surprised in his turn, said: "Is it because you did not, or you *would* not hear me, that you are so backward to answer me?"

"Neither the one nor the other," cried she, shaking off her unaccustomed abstraction: "but I was seeking to put my reply into appropriate—that is to say, into poetical language; for so fanciful a request deserves something more than a mere common-place prose answer."

"Well, and what has the muse suggested?"

"O, no muse has been at work for me; I have had the assistance only of memory; and all that she supplies me with, is this:

'Jove heard and granted half the suppliant's pray'r:
The rest, the Fates dispers'd in empty air.'

In like manner," continued Blanch, "*I* grant the first part of your petition; but the second is, really, so whimsical, that it fully merits its appointed doom—and thus I fulfil it!" Saying this, and raising her outspread palm to a level with her mouth, she lightly blew from her the invisible supplication—appeared for a moment to watch its upward progress, as if gazing after a floating gossamer, and then, turning her laughing face to Mr. Tremayne: "It is gone!" she cried; "like the witches in Macbeth, it has made itself—air, and has vanished!"

The frolic gracefulness of action that accompanied this little scenic performance, so completely fascinated her attentive companion, that he forgot to complain of the curtailed concession which he had obtained—forgot even to thank her for what she had granted—but, absorbed in the pleasure of admiring her gay and varying countenance,

her sportive gestures, and mirth-inspiring tones, continued silent, till awakened from his trance by the approach of my mother, who, in a low voice, said to Blanch: "You should do something more, my dear, to prove your gratitude to Sir Reginald, than merely sitting here to contemplate his gift. I heard him express a great wish for some music; but he abstains from asking you, lest your wrist should be, still, too weak to bear the effect of playing."

"O, no, grandmamma;—my wrist is now as strong as ever; I will get up and open the instrument directly."

"Are you *sure*," cried Mr. Tremayne, anxiously, "that you are able without risk to undertake it? Could not Miss Stavordale accompany you in a song?"

"My aunt Anne," said Blanch, coming up to me, and affectionately kissing me, "is very clever, and very accomplished; and does a vast number of things admirably well; but I do not think that she is quite the musician to whose playing I should wish to sing."

"Of course not!" cried my mother.

"Nobody would listen to you, whilst she was touching the keys!"

I sent them all away with threats of endless resentment for their rudeness. Blanch took her station at the piano-forte; Mr. Tremayne took *his* at the back of her chair, and she began the symphony of her song.

From the moment that her first note vibrated upon his ear, Sir Reginald turned down his cards, and gave his whole attention to her performance. In conformity with the tone of her spirits, her song was airy, light, and jocund; a true emblem of herself. Yet the rapidity of her execution, though it admitted not of sentiment, possessed every other excellence; and was as neat, as well accented, and as brilliant, as if she had selected the slowest Adagio. Every note *told*; and the admirable ease with which the whole was accomplished, afforded to the hearers, a sense of security—a repose from all care; which the same degree of velocity, attempted with inferior powers, would most painfully have destroyed.

The Baronet, apologizing to my father, arose as soon as she paused; and approaching

the instrument said, that he was come, in addition to his thanks, to afford her the pleasure of hearing that *she* possessed the ability of conveying to him more gratification, fastidious as he believed that age had made him, than any performer, public or private, to whom he had listened for the last eighteen years:

"I once knew a person who might have rivalled you," continued he:—But, since her time, I have met with no one worthy of being compared in the remotest degree to you! I hate what is usually termed singing!—It means either a lagging, sleepy, insipid succession of sounds, sweet, perhaps, but void of *flavour*, energy and pathos; or else, a distracting accumulation of indistinct, half-pronounced notes, from which no one bar could be selected, as having been clearly and decidedly articulated, and which, if listened to, puts the auditor out of breath, and out of temper, and leaves him to recover both how he can!"

"You are a nicely discriminating critic, Sir Reginald!" observed my mother.

"I was spoiled for a listener, lady Stavordale, to what I daily find is denominated

singing, by the inimitable performer to whom you have just heard me allude; and till this dear child poured into my ears the fine inflections of her highly cultivated voice, I often heartily wished that a temporary deafness would seize me every time I was condemned to the endurance of any of the customary tribe of singers." Then, addressing Blanch:

"Who is the master, my dear young lady, to whom the credit is due, of having so well developed and refined your natural powers?"

"I never learned of any body but my mother," answered Blanch.

"*Viva l'Italia!* where ladies can thus polish and draw forth the talents of their children! Yet even in Italy, the number of such mothers must be small: yours was of course distinguished by superior attainments?"

The countenance of Blanch instantly lighted up with the most animated expression of filial enthusiasm; and she was about to reply to Sir Reginald with all the warmth which the subject invariably elicits from her,

when Mr. Tremayne, leaning forward, and pointing to the second page of the open music-book before her, said: "I have never heard those beautiful words, set by any good composer. Are they not Guarini's?"

"Yes," replied she, "and the music to which they are here adapted, does them ample justice."

"Will you indulge me—and I will ask for nothing more to-night—with the pleasure of hearing, at last, an appropriate accompaniment to such favourite poetry?"

Blanch instantly complied; and thus an effectual check was put to the immediate prosecution of her intended *éloge* of her mother.

I own that I rejoiced at this. One train of communication might have led to another; and, from descanting on her mother's accomplishments, she might have been drawn on to expatiate upon her connexions. To talk of the old blind Painter—and to enter into family details, with a man of so much pride of ancestry as Sir Reginald, would have been dangerous. It is very possible that Mr. Tremayne, who, I believe, during his ill-

ness, drew from Clavering much information respecting the early associates and Italian parentage of Blanch—was aware, that it would be prudent to prevent any discussion upon the latter subject in the presence of his uncle, and therefore purposely diverted her from replying to what he last said.—Could Blanch have divined the motive of his anxiety to hear her sing those '*beautiful words* of Guarini,' I much question whether he would have found her so prompt to oblige him. It would be horror to her, I am persuaded, to owe any part of the consideration with which the Baronet now treats her, to his being held in ignorance of her mother's humble origin; and were the idea once to occur to her, there is every reason to believe that she would know no peace till the truth had been clearly explained to him. She has, long since, acquainted my father and mother with the real state of the case; and though the information was, at first, rather grievous to their aristocratical prejudices, their love for Blanch, and admiration of the parent whose personal recommendations she taught them to respect, so amply compensated for

every deficiency in the accidental advantages of birth and fortune, that they soon reconciled themselves to the plebeian extraction of their deceased daughter-in-law, and have never, I believe, bestowed a thought upon the matter since.

Such, I fear, would by no means be the easy manner in which the intelligence would be received by Sir Reginald. His estimate of the value of unmixed descent, it is probable, far surpasses ours; all that I have ever heard of him inclines me to this conclusion, and fills me with disquietude as to the event of his learning the particulars of Blanch's maternal extraction. How many circumstances there are in social life, which render thorough sincerity of dealing with each other (however desirable, abstractedly considered), almost too dangerous to be ventured upon! I am as adverse as most persons to duplicity or subterfuge; but yet, where the interests of those I love seem to be threatened, by the exercise of too unlimited a degree of frankness, I shrink from the open path which it is my nature to prefer; and become almost inclined to think that the me-

rit of acting up to that hardy old proverb, 'Honesty is the best policy,' may sometimes (not dishonestly) be foregone. I confess that I want courage to awaken the Baronet's patrician pride, by a voluntary avowal, for the effort of undertaking which I fear he would so ill reward me: yet, I feel that it is pitiful to yield to these fears; but still..... However, Blanch, it is most certain, will, sooner or later, hazard the experiment; and *her* influence may be of sufficient weight to avert some of its evil effects. Meanwhile, as I cannot prevail upon myself to be an active agent in the business, I must endeavour to tranquillize my conscience with the usual casuistry of cowards; and say to myself: "I can be accused of no direct falsehood; I have denied nothing; I have asserted nothing: I have only held my peace."

Sir Reginald did not depart till nearly eleven o'clock; and exacted from his nephew, ere he went, a positive promise, that he would retire immediately: "You look, my dear Horace," he cried, "very happy—but very unfit to prolong that happiness another instant. Go now, therefore, contentedly to

bed, and see what your dreams may do for you; the realities of the passed day, will perhaps be retraced in them; and afford you, in vision, a duplicate of all that you have enjoyed —a *tableau magique* of all that you are quitting!"

"With this hope, my dear uncle, I consent to retreat; but dreams are so notoriously fallacious, that their brightest illusions never confer, upon retrospection, delight so intimate as the 'sober certainty of waking bliss'!"

"But what bliss," cried my mother," either certain or illusive, will there be in a renewal of Mr. Crosby's visits and potations? You have done more than enough in one day, to incur the danger of such an infliction."

The Baronet, thanking her for thus enforcing his advice, took leave of us all in the most friendly manner, and repaired to his carriage. Mr. Tremayne was hurried off, much against his inclination, five minutes afterwards; and Blanch, as if she, too, required repose after the fatigue of being happy so long, bade us good night, and went up to her room almost immediately.

My mother seized the earliest opportunity after this, of holding a little private conference with me:

"Is that little girl," cried she, alluding to Blanch, "at all touched, do you think, by the merit of the lover her lucky stars have given her?—I am sadly afraid . . . ."

"Of what, dear Madam?"

"That she is too light-hearted, too young, too thoughtless, to feel, in the present case, as I could wish her."

"But why should you wish her to feel any thing beyond what she now manifests, for a man who, as yet, has made no declaration to her? What right has she to believe his attachment serious, till it is avowed? And what *thoughtlessness* does it imply that she holds back the gift of her heart till it is asked for?"

"Such reasoning as this, Anne,—and the acting upon it—lost you the heart, and hand too, of Colonel Ashford!—It is unfair to expect that men, without observing any symptom of being preferred, should risk a refusal by formal declarations. The regard that

waits for an offer to be kindled, must appear too calculating to deserve much gratitude."

"Do you think that Blanch is the kind of girl to deal out her regard in a calculating manner?"

"Not from motives of interest; but she might, from want of feeling."

"Dearest Madam! Why should you suspect her of want of feeling?—What sign has she ever given."...

"Pooh, pooh!—I do not mean feeling for her family or her friends; I do not mean feeling for the sick or the needy!—I am speaking of sentimental feelings; a sort of things at which, in their excess, one laughs; but which cannot, after all, be wholly dispensed with. These, I believe, either lie dormant in her heart, or have been left entirely out of her composition. She treats Mr. Tremayne with exactly as much unembarrassed gaiety as she does Mr. Westcroft; and to judge from all outward indications, she might as easily be prevailed upon to accept an offer from the one as from the other!"

"Are you of opinion, that if Mr. Westcroft asked to be permitted to perform for her any trivial personal service, she would refuse his request?"

No; I dare say that she would, on the contrary, make him do double what he intended!"

"I quite agree with you;—but tell me also, dear Madam; are you inclined to believe that she would accept from Mr. Westcroft, as a test of his regret for having incurred her momentary disapprobation, a serious sacrifice of his own wishes? a painful renunciation of his own plans?"

"No; there is not the remotest chance that she would do any thing but laugh at the proposal!—To what, however, does all this tend?—Has she accepted any sacrifice, or refused any service from our charming Horace?"

"She has. I heard him reminding her, that to-morrow would be his *last* evening here; and I, taking the earliest opportunity of asking her his meaning, she owned, with as conscious a look as you could have desired, that, on her jestingly alluding again

to the insincerity of his conduct towards lady Earlsford, he had volunteered, in expiation of a fault which he saw that she with difficulty could pardon, to give up the gratification of spending with us the few days which would elapse previous to the arrival of lady Horatia Tracy at Eastvale; and to dedicate that interval to his mother. This concession she accepted; though, immediately afterwards, she was tyrannical enough to refuse him the insignificant favour (as I should have imagined that she would have thought it) of being the first, when his arm is recovered, to clasp on her new bracelet!"

"My dear Anne, you delight me!—This really looks well!—And you say, that she positively seemed a little disconcerted when you brought her to confession?—Excellent! —Oh, now I am convinced that she is beginning to distinguish Tremayne from all the rest of his species! Mr. Westcroft would neither have had a similar refusal to encounter, nor have been honoured (or punished, which you choose), by a similar acceptance. No, no; Tremayne is the man; and the more rigorously she treats him, in

these early days of her power, the more confirmed I shall be in my hopes. 'Tis the nature of half our sex to love to revel a little in the first certainty of absolute dominion. *J'en puis parler, mon enfant, avec connoissance de cause!*"

I laughed; and protesting that I had not the smallest difficulty in believing her, bade her good night, and went up to bed.

Mr. Tremayne took leave of us about an hour ago, to return to Bovil Court; and had he been bidding us farewell to set sail for the East Indies, he could not have gone through the task with looks and expressions of more serious concern. We participate very cordially in his regret; for the two days which his health has enabled him to spend in our family circle, exhibited him in so companionable and pleasing a light, that he has left 'an aching void' behind him, which assuredly will not be easily filled up.

Yesterday, after breakfast, whilst he was

hesitating whether or not to walk out, lest his mother should drive over during his absence, a note from her was delivered to him, which, after having read, he requested me to furnish him with materials to answer immediately. I placed before him my writing-desk; and, as he took up the pen, he said:

"This will be equivalent to pronouncing and signing my own sentence!—But it must be done. My mother does not come here to-day; and she is urgent with me to spend at Bovil Court as large a portion as possible of time, before the arrival of lady Horatia Tracy. *To-morrow*, therefore," added he, with a sigh, "*to-morrow* seals my doom!—but to-day shall not be all consumed in vain regrets; I will hasten to write, and despatch this painful promise; and then——

> 'To-morrow and her works defy;
> Enjoy the present smiling hour,
> And put it out of Fortune's power'."

Whilst he was writing, and pretending to find a thousand difficulties in steadying his paper, on purpose to induce Blanch to sit near, and hold her hand upon the upper

part of the leaf, Mr. Westcroft came in. The two gentlemen greeted each other with the utmost cordiality; and their mutual civilities being over, the letter was resumed, and Mr. Westcroft sat down to talk with my mother.

"I was at Atherton yesterday," said he, "where they are, this evening, I find, to have a little dance. Are your young people going to it?"

"Martha is;—but Blanch is not fond of strangers, and prefers staying at home."

Mr. Tremayne raised his head, and directed towards Blanch a smile of mingled softness and delight, the most expressive I ever saw!—How *she* looked, I had no opportunity of observing, as she was seated with her back towards me; but I perceived that she immediately turned aside her face, to escape his eye; and after a moment's pause, he went on writing.

"I do not like," resumed Mr. Westcroft, lowering his voice, so as to be heard only by my mother and me, "I do not like, or at least, I do not know what to make of Mrs. Talbot's nephew, Maurice Villiers.—His principles, if they merit to be so called,

are completely of that description vulgarly attributed to Epicurus. He pretends that the only good worth living for, is pleasure; —that age, sickness, and misfortune give men a privilege to rid themselves of the burthen of existence; and these, with innumerable corresponding doctrines, he takes the proudest delight in professing, advocating, and endeavouring to disseminate!—At the age of one or two and twenty, is it not extraordinary to meet with so daring an assertor of impiety, and defender of suicide?"

My mother had grown pale during this alarming speech; and now, with breathless anxiety, exclaimed:

"In the name of Heaven, Mr. Westcroft, how is my poor Philippa affected by this young madman's pernicious sophistry?"

"She does not listen to it.—Metaphysical discussions are not in her line; and, as she is now circumstanced, it is most fortunate that such should be the case; for, pardon my plainness, dear lady Stavordale, your daughter has her share of vanity; and 'where vanity,' it has been very justly remarked, 'usurps the place of proper pride, it often

gives obliquity to the judgment.' She might, therefore, had this same vanity taken an argumentative turn, have been lamentably misled by plunging too deeply into the mazes of false philosophy; but she aims not at the triumphs of a casuist:—her object is, to obtain the honours of a conquering beauty; and she sets her cap most determinately at young Villiers, indifferent to his general modes of thinking, and alive only to the ambition of securing a gay, handsome, and fashionable admirer."

"Heaven forbid," cried I, "that her design should prosper!"

"I do not very confidently believe that it will. Villiers flatters, courts, and extols her, no doubt, profusely. The fact is, that she is the only young lady, at present, in his way; but, with such perversity of character as he demonstrates, it is scarcely to be questioned, that, were a fairer, or a newer object to appear before him, he would think (as one of his pleasures may be the love of variety), that he had a prescriptive right to transfer to the latest comer all his adulation, and to breathe in her ears all his unstable

vows. Let not our lovely Blanch, dear Madam, be exposed, in the absence of yourself or of Miss Stavordale, to his insidious attentions. Martha may meet him with less danger;—she is neither so young, nor so strikingly attractive."

Both my mother and I felt much disturbed by all that we had been listening to; and so exceedingly anxious to get Philippa away from such an associate, that it was agreed, if no pretext for recalling her should suggest itself, that a plain, straight-forward summons to return should be despatched to her, that very evening, in a note, of which Martha might be made the bearer.

When this matter was decided, we turned round to see what progress Mr. Tremayne had made in his letter-writing. He had just brought the undertaking to a conclusion; but manifested not, on that account, the smallest inclination to release from her attendance upon him, his marvellously patient young assistant. The letter required folding, —sealing.—She was to perform these operations; and whilst they employed her, he gained time, and our example gave him op-

portunity, to whisper to her a world of, I doubt not, "most pretty things," which, more than once brought the "eloquent blood" into her cheeks, or made her, with a half-smile, menace by signs, to throw down letter, wax, and seal, and leave him to wait upon himself.—But this was a cruelty which she had not the heart to put in execution; so the epistle was, at length, duly fitted for delivery;—the bell was rung, and it was committed to the care of lady Earlsford's messenger.

Just as this little transaction had taken place, my father, who had been out upon a ramble, entered the room, and, after shaking hands with Mr. Westcroft, addressed himself to Blanch, saying:—

"My dear, put on your bonnet, and come with me for a walk.—I want to shew you something."

Blanch instantly prepared to obey him, whilst Mr. Tremayne, after a little hesitation, said:—

"Is the *something* of which you speak, Sir Geoffry, of a description which others, as well as Miss Blanch, may be admitted to behold?"

"Oh, yes;" replied my father, smiling significantly; "and *you*, in particular, are entitled to view it, and to enjoy the pleasant surprise," added he, lowering his voice, "which it will occasion to her."

Thus sanctioned, Mr. Tremayne instantly started up, procured his hat, and held himself in readiness to set out. Blanch soon joined her grandfather, willing to attend him wherever he chose; and the pleased *trio* (after a slight solicitation to us from Mr. Tremayne, to follow, or accompany them) departed together.

My Father's object was, to lead Blanch, by a circuitous path, to the spot where she and I were sitting on the day when Mr. Tremayne's accident occurred, in order to exhibit to her the present state of the wooden bridge. She supposed it to be, by this time, utterly demolished; but her regret that such should be its doom, had not been vainly uttered. Mr. Westcroft, to whom she communicated it, had faithfully conveyed her very words to the ready ear of his sick friend; and that friend, the first time he was alone, afterwards,

with my father, had solicited, as a particular and personal favour, the permission to repair or re-construct the bridge, in compliment to the predilection for it of his fair and generous preserver. My father, seeing that his heart was bent upon succeeding in this application; and well aware, that the expense of the undertaking would lay him under no very heavy obligation to his young guest, consented to the proposal; and immediate orders were accordingly given for the erection of an entirely new bridge, on the site, and precisely on the model of its predecessor, and of wood which not having been stripped of its bark, should give it an air equally simple and rural!

Blanch, on being conducted by an unusual road to the edge of the stream, evinced at sight of the poor bridge still in existence all the surprise and all the gratification which her grandfather had anticipated. He explained to her, at whose intercession and at whose cost the fabric had been completely re-edified:

"It was," added he, "a little *galanterie*, (as lady Stavordale would call it) of Mr.

Tremayne's; and to him, my dear child, all your thanks are due."

"Well Blanch," cried I, when she related this to me, "how did you pay those thanks?"

She looked undetermined, for a minute, how to answer me; but at last, though not with her accustomed readiness, she said:

"I consented to what I had previously refused:—I took hold of his arm during the rest of our walk."

"And did that content him?"

"I suppose it did," answered she, laughing; "at least, I heard no complaints."

After this, all three made trial of the new bridge, by going upon it. They surveyed and admired the romantic prospect which its commanding elevation afforded; lingered to contemplate (with feelings of mingled awe at his late danger, and of thankfulness for his escape,) the depth of the current below them into which Mr. Tremayne had been precipitated; and then pursued their way to the opposite bank, and traced along its margin the windings of the stream, as high as to its very source. My father is an indefatigable walker, and therefore objected to none of

their proceedings; yet he owns, that, when they got back again to the place where our pleasure-boat is moored, (Mr. Tremayne, by the way, says, that it ought, henceforth, to be called the *life-boat*,) he was heartily glad to sit down. After allowing him sufficient time to rest, they prevailed upon him to undertake the management of the sails, and to indulge them with a little excursion upon the water. He called to a lad (the gardener's son) who often assists on these aquatic expeditions, and they all entered the boat. This sailing party cannot have been of very short duration; for they did not return till dinner had been waiting nearly a quarter of an hour, and Clavering had been thrown into a hundred fidgets and frights, lest the whole repast should be spoiled. But what cared these wanderers for dinners, or for housekeepers? They ate, indeed, as if the air had improved their appetites; but they ate also, as if neither knowing, nor wishing to know, what they swallowed.

The evening of this active day was spent in quiet home enjoyments. Martha, furnished with a letter to Philippa, went off to

her dance at Atherton, unenvied, and, if the truth must be told, unregretted. After her departure, we read, we talked, we had music,—we looked over drawings and sketches. Mr. Tremayne asked whether Blanch or I had ever taken the view from the spot where the boat is moored. I told him that she had begun a very spirited design of the bridge and surrounding rocks, but had been interrupted almost at the outset of the undertaking by the horror of seeing *the horse and his rider* plunged into the abyss beneath!—This unfinished performance he begged me, most earnestly, to shew him; and when I had complied, and Blanch was, for a few minutes, in a distant part of the room, he entreated, with yet greater importunity, that I would give it to him. I resisted his supplications for some time, deeming the sketch in too rude a state to be (in justice to Blanch) parted with to any body.

"But I," cried he, "am not *any body*!—I am impelled by a thousand motives to value—admire—and attach importance to every thing, not only that she does, but that she says, looks, wishes, or intends!—Give me,

then, this drawing, dearest Miss Stavordale! Were it brought but to the tenth part of the degree of finish which it has attained, the scene it represents—the time when it was traced—and the hand by which it was produced, would, in my eyes, render it inestimable!"

My mother has often declared, that I am the most wretched hand she ever met with, at pronouncing the monosyllable, *No!*—I suppose there may be some justness in the observation. Certain it is, however, that, on the present occasion, I was quite unequal to the task. The sketch was carefully cut out of the book to which it belonged; and, before Blanch returned to the table, its new proprietor had obtained and secreted it.

My mother's thoughts, as it was natural should be the case, recurring frequently, during the course of the evening, to the extraordinary youth with whom Philippa had accidentally become domesticated, she took an opportunity of asking Mr. Tremayne, whether he knew any thing of a Mr. Maurice Villiers, now on a visit to his aunt, Mrs. Talbot?

"Nothing personally," replied he; "but I have heard him mentioned by his brother, Major Villiers, with whom I am extremely well acquainted."

"And in what terms—may I venture to enquire?—did that brother speak of him?"

"He entered into no details about him; I can only remember, that he once, I think, called him an eccentric fellow—an oddity—and regretted his having thrown himself headlong into the society of a set of men, who instilled into him dangerous principles; and not only detached him from his natural friends, but drew him out of his proper sphere in life."

Recollecting that Mr. Westcroft's communication had been made in an under voice, my mother felt that they were to be regarded as, in some degree, confidential, and forbore any allusion to them. But the further account, brief as it was, now given her of this young man, corroborated every unfavourable impression which the conversation of the the morning had made upon her mind, and threw her into a fever of impatience to get Philippa out of the reach of his assiduities.

Soon after this, Mr. Tremayne, rising and approaching the open window, said: "What is it, that makes a man *determined to be happy*, and, knowing that his time for being so is limited,—what is it, that renders him so strangely disposed to be restless?—I cannot sit still to-night, without thinking that I am losing some chance of enjoyment which I may not have soon again within my reach. If I read, or listen to reading, I say to myself: 'this is what I could do at any time: why should I bestow an instant of the present hour on an employment which I can just as well pursue elsewhere, and under other circumstances?'—If I talk, I want to be silently attending to music; if I look at drawings, I am struck by the idea, that they are objects of a permanent nature, which I am a fool to spend an interval so precious and so brief in examining:—they may be looked at hereafter:—It should be my business, now, to snatch at some more evanescent pleasure!—and, under this impression, I start up as a child might do, to gaze around for some means of happiness, different to what I may meet with in any other place.—Miss Blanch,"

continued he, "it would be charity to assist me in the search."

"I have heard," cried she, "that to *search after* happiness, is said by wise people to be the surest way of missing it."

"But wise people are not always infallible. Nothing worth having comes to us unsought; and I can prove this axiom by a case in point. Had I sat still, as you are doing, in the glare and heat of those oppressive candles, I should have lost the prospect of one of the loveliest nights which we have had the whole year. The scene without presents to the eye, at this moment, every thing that to a painter—an admirer of nature—a lover of poetry, must be most attractive. I assure you, you lose a great deal by not coming to behold it."

"You will make me," cried Blanch, throwing down her work, and rising to join him, "as idle, Mr. Tremayne, as you are yourself."

"I am glad," he replied, as she approached the window, "that you allow me influence sufficient to make you change, in any instance, your own predeterminations. I like to derange the plans of those whose attention

I wish to engross;—I like to counteract their views of independent occupation"——

"You like, in short," interrupted Blanch, "to be the principal object of interest!—I assure you that this is no new discovery to me; and I almost think, that you love to be sick for the sake of being nursed—and find pleasure in being helpless, for the sake of being waited upon!"

"Sickness," he replied, "we will put out of the question: your Clavering's nursing, excellent as it was, did not quite repay me for all I recently underwent;—but helplessness,—oh, helplessness is, in some cases, delicious!"

To this Blanch made no answer; but, putting her head out of the window, she began surveying the unclouded brilliancy of the night, and asking him some questions about one of the constellations. How he replied, I know not; for he, also, leant forward, and their voices soon sunk to a low murmur, which it was impossible distinctly to overhear. After this, we heard no more of Mr. Tremayne's restlessness. He remained stationary at the window, till, on the en-

trance of the servants with the supper-tray, my mother, bidding him remember how lately he had been a sufferer from the night air, advised him to give up star-gazing for this evening, and come and take a sandwich and a glass of wine.

Martha did not stay late at Atherton, nor return in remarkably good humour. What had happened to discompose her, it would have been no very easy matter to induce her to communicate. Her temper is naturally close; and the fear which she constantly lives in of my mother's ridicule, increases this disposition, and makes her weigh every word which she utters before her as scrupulously, as if she was speaking upon oath. Now and then, a sudden fit of testiness provokes her to throw off her habitual caution, and, for the time, she utters what she feels; but these momentary starts of unguardedness only render her petulant,—not confidential; and, except to some girl younger and sillier than herself, Martha will never be spontaneously unreserved.

She brought back, in answer to my mo-

ther's note, the following lines from Philippa:—

"DEAR MADAM,

"As you so positively require it, I will certainly return to Hazleford to-morrow. Yet, for so hasty a removal, neither Mrs. Talbot nor I were prepared; and you assign no reason for a mandate, more peremptory than any which, I own, I ever expected to receive from you!—There must, undoubtedly, be some mystery at the bottom of all this; and I trust, my dearest mother, that, when we meet, you will not refuse me the explanation which it is so natural that I should be anxious to obtain.

"Believe me ever, dear Madam, your most affectionate daughter.

"PHILIPPA STAVORDALE."

"This affectionate daughter of mine," said my mother, handing to me the letter when she had read it, "fully appreciates, I perceive, the merit of her obedience. She will probably bring back with her a glorious supply of

ill-humour:—but no matter. If I can get her out of the way of that free-thinking fool, I shall be happy!—Amongst all the varieties of the fool *genus*, there is none which I cannot better tolerate than the irreligious fool. A good fool, or a negative fool, has a right to pass muster; and even presumption in worldly matters may be borne with;—Philippa is not without a very competent share;—but presumption, upon the highest of ALL subjects, is too disgusting to be endured at *any* age—and, least of all, in youth!"

Most heartily did I coincide with her in these sentiments, and sincerely love and honour her for the energy with which she expressed and felt them.

When we parted for the night, Mr. Tremayne, in terms the most elegant, and with looks which evinced that he spoke from the heart, addressed to us all round the warmest acknowledgments for the unwearied attention which we had shewn him, and the frankest professions of never-ending respect, gratitude, and affection. My father and mother said all that was friendly and proper, and cordially shook hands with him; Martha,

awkwardly shy, extended to him the tips of her fingers, looking another way, and colouring as if she had been doing something wrong; and Blanch, always artless—always as superior to false shame as to unnecessary formality, yielded to him her hand without hesitation, but vainly tried to utter more than the words "Good night;" and just as vainly (their eyes meeting for a moment) to suppress a *very* soft, unbidden sigh!—Inaudible almost as it was, Mr. Tremayne caught, nevertheless, the transporting sound, and looked as if he could have fallen at her feet to thank her! The colour in his cheeks heightened to a glow the most vivid;—and his eyes—those spirited and expressive eyes—darted at her a glance so tender and impassioned, that had I needed any confirmation of the sincerity of his attachment, I should have found it in the unpremeditated ardour of that look. He released her hand, however, without speaking, and turned to me. Our farewell compliments were simple and short, but most sincerely friendly; and, the next minute, we all separated, and repaired to our respective apartments.

Philippa is, truly, an unlucky projector! No sooner had she cast the eyes of politic (and, perhaps, too, of genuine) admiration upon Mr. Tremayne, than she espied in him certain indications of preference for Blanch, very inauspicious to her hopes, and rendered yet more so, by the manifest partiality of his uncle for the same object. She next directed her attention to Mr. Maurice Villiers; and from him she has been torn with the most barbarous precipitation, and no adequate motive assigned for the deed. My mother thinks it wrong (and imagines also, that it might even be attended by some risk) to betray the information gathered from Mr. Westcroft. It is possible, that Philippa, in the heat of anger, and the overflowings of romantic confidence, might convey his name to Mrs. Talbot; from her, should it travel to her nephew, a quarrel—a challenge might ensue; and my mother never could forgive her own indiscretion. She therefore steadily refuses to gratify poor Philippa's incessant solicitude to understand the reason of her recall. This unaccustomed reserve in-

ritates her beyond description: she is, by turns, moodily silent, or indignantly loquacious; she repels all attempts at conciliation; answers fretfully to my father,—resentfully to my mother,—coldly to me,—and impatiently to Martha! We *bear and forbear* more than ninety-nine out of a hundred parents and sisters would endure; and time, we hope, will bring things round to their former state.

Mr. Tremayne was here yesterday; but his visit was short and not very animated. Two causes suggested themselves to me for the apparent gravity of his manners. Blanch was out, walking with my father; and lady Earlsford, though she called professedly, to load us with thanks, and to acknowledge "a debt of gratitude which never could be cancelled"—obviously spoke more from the *head*, than from the *heart*; and with all her endeavours to acquit herself with propriety of her task, left upon our minds, at parting, a strong impression of her confirmed dislike. Unfortunately, we are not the sort of people, who know by what arts to disarm the resentment of a person, whose favour we have for-

feited rather by unavoidable circumstances than by design. It is true, that my father gave her, on one occasion, desperate offence; but I still think too well of lady Earlsford to believe that, were *that* all, she would have been so evidently estranged from the whole family. The influence obtained by Blanch over her brother and her son;—the fear that it may tend to strengthen the prepossession of the former against Miss Tourberville; and perhaps, some apprehension that we are all on tip-toe to avail ourselves of Sir Reginald's partiality for our young kinswoman in order to bring on a connexion between her and Mr. Tremayne; each of these reasons, singly or collectively, may contribute to alienate her from us. Mr. Westcroft (our Hazleford Gazette my mother calls him) has thrown out hints which incline me to suspect that her ladyship has long entertained a passionate desire to accomplish an union between her niece and her son. Whether there was any probability that, but for the intervention of Blanch, she might have succeeded, I am unable, unless by conjecture, to decide; but the more I see, either of the lady or the

gentleman, the less I am disposed to think them well assorted to each other. Putting Sir Reginald's prejudice against Miss Tourberville out of the question, and setting aside the superior captivations of Blanch, it strikes me, that a character of such inanity as his cousin's—a mind of so little *compass*—a style of prattle rather than of conversation, so unmeaning, so spiritless, so void of all originality or interest, could never have assimilated with an understanding of such vigour, feelings so animated, and abilities so richly cultivated, as those of Mr. Tremayne. He is gentle and kind to her; but there the matter ends. The most watchful observer can detect in him no delight in her conversation—the keenest eye can trace in his looks no appeal to her feelings,—no reference to her opinions,—no participation in her tastes. She is his mother's *protegée*—his near relation—a child deserted by her father, and almost unnoticed by the head of her family, and he pays to her in a predicament so disastrous, all that a generous man may be supposed to consider as her due. Lady Earlsford must rely, with extraordinary confidence,

indeed, upon her own influence with her son, if she expects, out of such materials as these, to succeed in building an altar to Hymen!

Sir Reginald, we have heard through Clavering, has caused to be distributed amongst several of our servants, donations so magnificent in acknowledgment of their attendance upon his nephew during his illness, that we are quite confounded at so much unnecessary liberality. Clavering herself, the most disinterested of the set, rejected every offer in the shape of money; and has got instead, a very unusual, but at the same time, a very appropriate present for a housekeeper—it is a massive silver chain, with a handsome embossed hook at one end, to fasten it to her waist, and a ring at the other for the purpose of attaching to it her keys of office. In addition to this, Mr. Tremayne has forced upon her a plain, but excellent gold watch. I wonder whether the Baronet's gift was the device of his own fancy! Perhaps the housekeeper at Eastvale wears a similar decoration. We may soon have an opportunity of ascertaining this; for Sir Reginald has just been here, to engage us *all*

to dine with him on Thursday—the day following that on which Lady Horatia Tracy (from whom he received a letter this morning) will arrive at his house.

Blanch has not been quite herself during these last three or four days. We catch less frequently, the careless, but beautiful tones of her voice, singing, by snatches, as she flies about the house, a few bars of some favourite air. My mother and I have observed, that she loves more than formerly to wander in the pleasure grounds alone;—and further, we found out yesterday, that she is become, almost exclusively, devoted to the poetry of *Gray*.

Philippa, with some malice, yesterday remarked, that the only consequences resulting from Mr. Tremayne's late abode here, which she could discern, seemed to be the diminution of Blanch's accustomed spirits:—"He has stolen away her heart, I am afraid!" added she.

"Fear nothing!" retorted my mother. "Mr. Tremayne is too honourable to appropriate to himself any thing for which he has not given an equivalent."

Philippa answered only with a scornful smile, and a look of affected incredulity.

Mrs. Talbot, accompanied by her nephew, drove hither this morning, for the double purpose, she said, of scolding Blanch for not coming to her dance, and of quarrelling with my mother for depriving her, so abruptly, of the company of Philippa. Both these subjects of attack were parried and laughed off with tolerable dexterity; and our friendly neighbour (for such really she has always proved herself to the whole family, though Philippa, undoubtedly, is her favourite) suffered herself to be appeased, and sat with us a considerable time, chatting upon general subjects. We learned, that an increasing intimacy is establishing itself between her and lady Earlsford. She and Mr. Maurice Villiers dined at Bovil Court yesterday, and are to be there again to-morrow: —"My nephew," cried she laughing, "had a delightful opportunity of waging what he so dearly loves (a war of words) with

lord Earlsford's tutor, Mr. Lloyd. At Atherton, you know, he is neither understood, nor listened to. I have no taste for controversy, and even Philippa was always glad to get him down from his altitudes, and make him talk like other young men."

"I should like prodigiously," said my mother, steadily regarding the juvenile controvertist, "to hear in what manner Mr. Villiers contrives to talk *un*like other young men!—Perhaps he will, sometime or other, have the goodness to indulge my foolish curiosity: I have better taste than my daughter, and should, I dare say, admire his *altitudes* exceedingly."

Most men, at Villiers's age, would have been a little abashed by the mock gravity of this speech; but he, I fancy, has overcome all such weakness; for he answered with the utmost composure: "Few people less merit than myself, the charge of affecting premature wisdom.—Believe me, lady Stavordale, I still talk *very* like a young man, for I talk as I feel:—and no longer desire to retain the power of utterance, than whilst those feelings shall remain unimpaired."

My mother would not provoke him to enlarge upon their nature, lest he should, in the presence of Blanch and Martha, be induced to say any thing which she might have cause to regret that she had called forth. She therefore started a conversation respecting the expected guest at Eastvale, with whom we found that Mrs. Talbot is slightly acquainted; talked of a new tragedy, and of some other recent publications which have just been sent to us from town; and, in short, managed so well, that neither aunt nor nephew were tempted to allude again to any subject we wished to avoid.—Before the visit ended, Philippa, as usual, chose to enjoy the solace of a little confidential *tête à tête* with her friend; and drew her off into the garden for that purpose. Whilst they were gone, Mr. Villiers's chief attention was given to Blanch. There was nothing to disapprove in his manner of addressing her; and the topics which he selected were just such as the common herd of young men pitch upon, for the entertainment of young ladies. He spoke of dancing and music; asked whether she was in the habit of riding,—and though

she answered in the negative, gave her excellent information as to the places where she would find the best ground for a canter; and cautioned her against directing her course towards other spots, which he represented as unfavourable to the speed of even the soundest horse, and not always secure from the obstruction of harvest-waggons, which, at this time of the year, he added, often rendered an unimpeded ride in the country the most difficult thing in the world to accomplish. He then detailed some of the hindrances which he had himself encountered: talked of the narrowness of lanes which we had never visited, and of the rugged pavement of hamlets which we had never heard of.

Blanch allowed him uninterruptedly, to direct or to warn her; listened to as much of what he said as its want of interest would allow her; and saw, I believe, with real satisfaction the return of Mrs. Talbot; as it released her from the necessity of appearing any longer to attend to him.

Two mornings ago, being ashamed to ask for a fire, as I heard every body around me, exclaiming what a charming day it was, I stole out soon after breakfast, to endeavour, by a brisk walk in some part of the grounds, to restore a little feeling to my almost benumbed hands and feet. This is one of my annual seasons of corporeal misery; and spring is another. Every year, when fires are first discontinued, and before they are resumed, it is scarcely credible how much I suffer from the chilliness of my constitution, and with how little sympathy I meet. I have unfortunately obtained the character of being so very an "insect shivering at a breeze," that the rest of the family never pay the least regard to what I say about the weather, and (till somebody else comes in, and confirms my assertions) seem all to agree in thinking, that what I term *cold*, every one else would call *heat*. I am therefore reduced to the alternative, either of ordering a fire in my own chamber, and living entirely apart from all the others, or of remaining to shake and do penance in the usual sitting-room, with fingers that seem to have in them no

circulation; cheeks as pale as death; and a nose frozen blue from its very tip!

Whilst industriously pacing up and down, along the side of a southern bank, enjoying most heartily the comforting beams of the sun; and repeating to myself Shakspeare's incomparable picture of Winter:

"When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail, &c."

I was suddenly joined by Mr. Tremayne.

We shook hands, and mutually expressed our satisfaction at this meeting; but I own, that he somewhat surprised me by still remaining at my side, after our friendly greetings were over; and when we had taken a few turns, I asked him whether he had been into the house, and had found it deserted.

"No," replied he. "I entered your premises through the garden gate; and hearing from a man, who was at work near it, that you were walking in this direction, I sought you out, without going into the house at all."

"You did me great honour, said I; and I looked, I believe, as if waiting to hear what had procured me such a mark of distinction. He seemed to comprehend all that I left un-

spoken; and presently, addressing me with unusual seriousness, said:

"There is so much goodness and gentleness, dear Miss Stavordale, in your disposition, that it encourages me to hope you will not, if I solicit it, deny me the privilege of looking upon you as a friend to whom I may frankly open my heart!—Are you willing to accept my confidence, and to assist me by your advice?"

"I am willing," answered I, giving him my hand, "to do whatever may be in my power, to prove to you the sincerity of my regard and esteem."

He warmly thanked me; and drawing the hand which I had held out to him under his arm, we walked slowly on, whilst he thus pursued the conversation:

"You cannot be unconscious my kind friend, of the impassioned admiration with which I regard your lovely niece!—I have never sought to disguise it, from either her family, or my own. My uncle you may plainly perceive, more than sanctions, he zealously wishes to promote my views; Sir Geoffry and lady Stavordale give me reason to flatter

myself that *their* consent would not be withheld; and your sweet Blanch (mine I dare not yet call her) might, I will hope, be brought, by persevering assiduities, to give me—heart for heart! The fortune which I have to offer her, is, alas! very inadequate to her merits, and to what I should delight in showering upon her; but, independently of all assistance from my uncle, who yet holds out to me the most generous promises, it is enough for happiness with a woman who could love me; and Blanch, I feel assured, would reject an Emperor, if she did *not* love him. Thus far, then, no insurmountable difficulties seem to lie in my way.—But I grieve to add, that I have not yet enumerated all the sources whence opposition might arise!—my mother—hitherto, so anxious to contribute to my felicity—hitherto, so affectionately yielding, so accessible to entreaty, is—How shall I say it?—on the present occasion inexorably adverse to my wishes!

"So I feared!" exclaimed I—

"But perhaps," resumed he with quickness, "you have feared it on mistaken grounds—you have erroneously imagined,

that it was to Blanch herself, or to her family, that my mother objected.—No! on my honour, it is to neither.—She acknowledges the attractions of their grand-daughter, and does every justice to the high character, the conduct, and the rank of her respectable connexions."

"Yet I am certain," cried I, "that she does not love us."

"Do any of us love those to whom we attribute the defeat of a favorite project? My mother, I will not disguise it from you,—has long and anxiously had it in contemplation to effect an union between Jane Tourberville and me; and she refuses all credit to my repeated and solemn asseverations, that, had no such family as yours ever become known to me, I should, with equal firmness, have resisted her wishes. It is no compliment to Blanch to say that such a marriage never *can* take place: it never *could* have taken place, even if she had been wholly out of the question.—My refusal, however, being entirely ascribed to the attachment which I have avowed for her, accounts for whatever diminution of cordiality may have appeared

in my mother's conduct; and I trust that the knowledge of this will remove from your mind, every idea that her objections are founded on any thing of a personal, and consequently offensive nature. There is *no* connexion to which she would not as vehemently oppose herself; and, such is the delusion which incessant rumination on the subject has created in her mind, that she has worked herself up to believe, as confidently as I *disbelieve*, that Jane is secretly attached to me! Were there the slightest foundation for this surmise—were it, I might almost say, a possible circumstance—I would not, in delicacy to Jane, allude to it even in this moment of confidential communication;—but the whole is a fallacy, as time will certainly and clearly demonstrate. Meanwhile, the supposition adds to my difficulties; since, having no power to disprove it beyond mere assertion, my mother, who reasons upon her own conjectures as if they were certainties, is continually appealing to my sense of honour,—my feelings of humanity.—In short, is for ever varying her attacks, in order to induce me to requite a passion, which I not

only am convinced has no existence; but to which, even if it *had* (as I am guiltless of having sought to inspire it), I must be a fool to think myself bound to attend, at the price of all my own hopes of felicity!"

"A good lesson," cried I, "if they could hear it, for young ladies who are too ready to let their hearts '*unsought be won*'."

"It is not a lesson," resumed he, smiling, "which the beautiful Blanch will ever require! '*The conscience of her worth*,' is too strong in her! But now, Miss Stavordale, that you have had the patience to listen to the tedious statement which I have been giving you, will you aid me with your counsel how to act with respect to Sir Geoffry and lady Stavordale? Aware, as they must be, of my sentiments for their grand-daughter, what will they think of my hesitating to make any explicit declaration of those sentiments? I am in terror lest they should be induced to suppose me capable of meaning to trifle with her,—yet, during the height of my mother's infatuation in the cause of her neice, I own myself reluctant to inflict upon her the mortification of seeing me step

forward as the open and avowed candidate for the hand of another. Her consent and disapprobation are equally powerless (in a worldly point of view) to affect my prospects; but as a son, grateful for a thousand instances of past tenderness, and very *very* loth to irritate or grieve her, I find myself unfitted to act in direct defiance of her known wishes! —A short interval will, probably, undeceive her (and that without any interference of mine) as to the real nature of Jane Tourberville's regard for me. During that interval, however, in what manner will my silence be interpreted by Sir Geoffry and lady Stavordale?"

"Think not so much of *their* censure or approval," answered I, "as of preserving uninjured the peace of mind of the now happy, and as yet unfearing *Blanch*. If, at the termination of the brief period you mention, you are convinced that no further obstacles will intervene to prohibit your addresses to her, avail yourself, as much as my father and mother will allow, of the intermediate time to recommend yourself to her favour; but if the shadow of a doubt

should arise of your perfect freedom to propose for her, when that interval has elapsed, remit your assiduities, Mr. Tremayne, since they must be in that case, no less perfidious than cruel. Blanch is yet very young; and her character seems scarcely yet developed; but I believe it to be capable of the most fervent and profound attachment. Beware then that you call not its affections vainly forth!—Proceed upon certain grounds; and hazard not, without well considering what you are about, the dangerous experiment of awakening, perhaps only to disappoint, the sensibility of an ardent, animated girl, whose friends confide her tranquillity to your honour; and whose misery, should you be compelled to resign her after securing her regard, you would be the first to detest yourself for having caused!"

"True, oh, most true!" exclaimed he, "in such a case, I should indeed, abhor myself!—But these warnings, dear Miss Stavordale, are addresssed to a man too seriously captivated—and I trust also too incapable of treachery, to require them. I am delayed only by the motives which I have recapitu-

lated to you, from soliciting the consent of your family. The mistake respecting Jane, into which my mother has fallen, once cleared up, my path lies open before me!—I shall then, I trust, obtain her cheerful acquiescence to my views; my uncle will gladly second it with his.—Blanch will have had full leisure to learn the lesson which I hope to teach her;—and you, our mutual friend, —our kind admonisher,—our beloved aunt, —shall accompany us to the modest residence of my forefathers, and teach us, at our outset, how to combine, in imitation of what we behold at Hazleford, hospitality with prudence, and elegance with frugality!"

I thanked him, laughing, for the timely invitation; and a conversation then followed, scarcely less interesting to me than to himself, in which he dwelt with so much enthusiasm upon the various excellencies which he had detected in Blanch, that much as I already believed him to be attached to her, I had no idea, till then, how thoroughly *head over ears* he is in love! Her personal graces, while enumerating her perfections, were not, of course, among the latest to be

brought forward; but, to do him justice, he expatiated with an animation quite as energetic, upon the qualities of her heart and understanding.

"She is yet," cried he, "but in her dawn. How bright, however, not only in promise, but in reality, is the radiance which she already emits! Who is there, with any capacity to value a truly genuine character, that would not be charmed by that mixture of sterling sense and noble simplicity so unconsciously displayed in hers! She has the innocence of youth, without its heedless credulity; her mind has been trained to *think*; her innate rectitude has been confirmed by the early infusion of sound principle; and nothing has been taught her upon the superficial plan, of doing any thing for *effect*. Her love of truth is so intimately blended with all the other qualities of her mind, that it communicates its own open character to every look, every movement, every word; and so total is her freedom from affectation, that it almost amounts to ignorance of its existence!—That she knows herself to be beautiful, can scarcely admit a doubt:—had

no officious tell-tale ever whispered to her the information, can she, with so much taste for whatever is most exquisite in the fine arts.—Can she have beheld herself in a mirror, without becoming sensible of the resemblance which she bears to many of those graceful productions of antiquity, which she has been trained to admire, and habituated to copy. Yet, how admirably superior to all vanity do we constantly find her! Her mind seems not to be more inflated by the consciousness of outward attractions than by the knowledge that she possesses youth and health; and enjoys, in common with the rest of her species, the blessings of light, liberty, and air.—How truly may it be said of her, that,

'Thoughtless of beauty, she is Beauty's self!'"

"In addition to all this," cried I, "not one word of which I feel inclined to dispute, she is of a temper, which bids defiance to petty provocations; which might, doubtless, be made angry, but never could be rendered turbulent, malicious, or sullen. If offended by one to whom she owes respect and defer-

ence, she bends at the moment to the passing storm,—is silent, and retires as soon as she can beyond its reach. If my sisters say or do any thing which she believes herself entitled to resent, she tells them plainly, and on the spot, what she thinks; and if a concession is to be obtained, receives it with grateful pleasure: if nothing can be procured but recrimination, she goes away; and when she returns, only shews her remembrance of what has passed, by looking, for a few minutes, a little graver than before the contest happened!—For your further comfort, continued I, "if you mean, my dear nephew-elect, to introduce her into the circles of high life, I believe that I may add she is one less likely to be swayed by mischievous example than almost any creature you may meet with in that perilous vortex! A fool might as well attempt to move the globe as to influence her; and from a profligate, whether male or female, she would shrink with a sort of instinctive abhorrence, that would demand more pains and longer time to surmount, than people in the gay world have opportunity to bestow.—Yet, when there is so

much inexperience, the purest integrity may be misled, if left too much to its own guidance. Do not, therefore, Mr. Tremayne, be too fashionable a husband;—be her friend, her adviser, her companion;—and if ever you cease to take delight in these offices, remove her far from the scenes of dissipation, where, wounded, on the one hand by neglect from her lawful protector, and assailed on the other by temptations which, singly, and in very early life, require almost supernatural fortitude to withstand,—her peace may eventually be wrecked!"

"You wind up every representation of the future, my dear Miss Stavordale, with too tragical an imagination! This is the second time to-day, that, after painting a sunny, smiling, serene landscape, you have suddenly involved it in clouds and horror! But reprehension will not so well convince you of the injustice of your distrust, as experience. When the wished-for period arrives, that will indissolubly connect my fate with that of your anxiously-beloved Blanch, you will find that I have not married her, all-beautiful as she is, to exhibit her triumph-

antly in the public eye;—to place her where she may become "*the glass of fashion,—the observed of all observers,*"—but to share with her the pleasures of domestic life; to gather round her, and to enjoy in partnership with her, the society of the friends whom we mutually love; to introduce her to the acquaintance of persons eminent for genius and talents; to indulge with her in the delight of travelling—of making known to her the beauties of her paternal country, and of visiting, with her, every celebrated spot in the land that gave birth to her mother!"

"This is an enchanting picture!" cried I. "It has done me good for the whole day. But tell me, is London, then, to be left entirely out of the question?"

"That would scarcely be possible, even were it rationally desirable. No; London must, at intervals, become our scene of action, since there is every probability that, some time hence, I may be elected to a seat in parliament. But London, though I do not think its atmosphere (as somebody calls it) quite so infectious as you do, is not the place where I have ever supposed that con-

jugal happiness could be most successfully cultivated. As I, therefore, shall have no views of felicity when I become *a Benedict*, unconnected with the married state, a town life (even if its attractions possessed more novelty) will, to me, be of all others the least desirable. Who, that enters thoroughly into its spirit, can find *time* to be happy during the height of a full London season?—I have known men, who, in the country, never rode, never walked, never read—nay, scarcely ever stirred, without their wives—yet who, in town, could scarcely find leisure, twice a week, for a few minutes conversation!—Oh, no! London I shall only consider as a necessary evil; and, should I ever be induced to think that my wife was beginning to tolerate too complacently the sacrifice of each others' company which it imposed upon us, I would give up every thing,—politics, intimacies, family connexions,—every tie and every pursuit, to hurry her back into the country, and to reconcile her, by degrees, to its uniform and less tumultuous pleasures."

At this moment we heard the voice of Blanch, enquiring of the gardener whether

he had seen me?—We instantly emerged from the snug recess which I had chosen as a spot to *bask* in, and quickened our pace to meet her. She looked surprised, and evidently pleased, at sight of my companion; but, after the first civilities had passed, said, (and, I thought, with an air which, though she tried to smile, shewed her rather piqued): "I did not expect, when Mr. Tremayne went away from Hazleford, that the first time he came hither again he would avoid entering the house, and seek for nothing beyond a private walk with my aunt!"

I believe that this implied reproof was far more gratifying to the object against whom it was levelled, than Blanch either intended or perceived. She saw not the glow which it brought into his face, for she was proceeding a little in advance of him, and did not immediately look round; but his *voice* must have told her, that his spirits had not been much depressed by her remonstrance: "I plead guilty," cried he; "I have both avoided the house, and purposely sought a conference with Miss Stavordale,—and it has been the most interesting one I almost ever was

engaged in!—I have been talking to her of the woman I love!"

"Have you?" cried Blanch, stooping to gather some mignonette,—"then I am sorry I interrupted you."

"If you would let me talk of her to *you*," resumed he, bending down to assist her in her occupation, and trying to gain a sight of her countenance, "there would be no occasion for such sorrow!—Miss Stavordale may, perhaps, be a little tired of the subject; but *I* am still as eager to discuss it as ever; and such an auditress as *you* would be invaluable! Come, let me persuade you to turn back with me, and hear all I have to say."

"No, no; one confidant in a family is quite enough!—Your love will all evaporate in words, if it is so indiscriminately proclaimed to every chance comer."

"Believe me, it is in no danger of any such sudden extinction!—It is a love as firm and faithful, as it is ardent."

"Well—I can only say, that, were I in your place, Mr. Tremayne, I would be less liberal of my communications—I would confine them to *two* individuals."

"And who should those favoured individuals be?"

"My mother should be one, and, having secured *her* approbation of my choice,—the lady that I loved should be the other."

Mr. Tremayne and I interchanged looks of perplexed enquiry on hearing this speech, which was uttered in a quiet, yet impressive tone, that convinced us both it had more meaning "*than met the ear.*" At last, the gentleman broke silence:

"Of course," said he, "every man who has the proper feelings of a son, will, in the first instance, confide a secret of this nature to his mother, and endeavour to win her concurrence to his views. If, however, his efforts do not eventually succeed, is a son (at full age to judge for himself,) bound, from this moment, to renounce his hopes of happiness? Is he, in your opinion, obliged scrupulously to preclude himself from the relief of conversing with a friend, on a subject which, naturally, lies uppermost in his thoughts?—Are you so rigorous an advocate for parental authority as to require all this?"

"I know not what to say," answered Blanch, after a short pause; "the case, as you state it, is a difficult one to decide. There probably always will come a time, when sons without incurring much censure, may think that they are entitled to emancipate themselves from maternal jurisdiction, and to address their vows to whomsoever they please. I have nothing to do with their privileges of this sort; and if the world does not condemn them, it is not for me to pretend to greater strictness. I have been taught, however, to believe, that a young *woman* can do few things more reprehensible, than allowing herself to listen to professions of attachment from any man, who could so far disregard the feelings of his mother, as to utter them in defiance of her wishes. '*If such professions are serious*,' my own excellent mother used to say, '*they are a breach of filial obligation, and will be punished by their very success:—if they are the mere effusions of light gallantry, it is safer to silence than even to laugh at them.*'"

Mr. Tremayne walked on for some seconds (probably meditating upon this *avis au lec-*

teur) in silent thoughtfulness; but at length, turning to his companion, with great gentleness, he said:

"Your mother, sweet Blanch, was like yourself, every thing that is most upright and honourable—and I revere her for the high principles which she has instilled into her daughter, as much as I love that daughter for the tribute which she is always anxious to pay to her mother's virtues. No man who heard you repeat the precepts which you have just uttered, would have the presumption to urge you to depart from your conviction of their justice: he would only, if he had the misfortune to come within the class of those whom you have learned to think it a duty to discountenance, redouble all his efforts to annul every obstacle which forbade him to aspire to you."

The countenance of Blanch brightened as he spoke; and, pleased to have been so clearly understood, and answered with so much delicacy, she bestowed upon him one of the softest smiles I have ever known her direct towards him; and then, to change the subject of conversation, asked whether he was

still a resident at Lady Earlsford's, or a guest now at his uncle's.

"I changed my quarters yesterday," replied he, looking gratefully at her; "Lady Horatia reached Eastvale an hour before dinner, and my uncle sent me immediate notice of her arrival. She has brought with her three other visitors, and an additional party came this morning; so that Eastvale, on your first introduction to it, will present a gayer scene than it has done for years.—You all dine there to-day, do you not?"

"We are all asked," replied I; "but, really, our number is so formidable"——

"Oh, do not think of numbers!—My uncle's house is as capacious as his heart; and I am certain that he would be seriously disappointed were he deprived of the pleasure of receiving as many of the name of Stavordale, as Hazleford—*dear* Hazleford, can send forth!"

We were now so near the house that my mother heard our voices, and threw up the parlour window to welcome Mr. Tremayne, whom she supposed to be just arrived, and to invite him to walk in. He complied very

readily; and remained with us nearly half an hour longer, describing several of the company who were to be at Eastvale, and in particular Miss Tracy, Lady Horatia's youngest daughter, who, in imitation of her sister, is on the point of becoming a bride.

"The personage whom she has honoured with her choice," continued Mr. Tremayne, "will, at first sight, I suspect, rather startle you. Prepare yourselves to behold, what, in these *vaccinating* days, is very rarely to be met with:—a young man, who, without being deformed, is conspicuous for his ugliness. Lord Glenmorne is a Colossus, put together without regularity:—awkward, gaunt, shambling; with a dissonant voice, an ominous squint,—and a head so large, that, huge as is his frame, it looks as if he had taken it from the trunk of some brother-giant yet more bulky than himself. This Titan, however, is said to be of gentle and humane habits; and to possess talents, which, but for his natural timidity, would enable him to make a brilliant figure in society. Helen Tracy, I am told, won his heart by the promptitude and good-nature with which,

at a large party in town, she devised some plausible excuse for him to an old lady whose gown he had torn, or otherwise maltreated; and whose resentful looks so cruelly disconcerted him, that, willing as he was to apologize, he could not find voice to utter a word, but stood, making a thousand involuntary grimaces, bowing and changing colour, and enduring all the martyrdom a bashful man 'is heir to,' till Helen interposed, and rescued him from his sufferings. *La belle et la bête* had never spoken to each other before, though they had often met at dinners and assemblies; but, from that moment, they became the best friends in the world, and are now—two months afterwards—on the eve of marriage."

"It is not often," cried my mother, "that Hymen kindles his torch at a spark struck from the eyes of an angry old woman."

"I think, grandmamma," said Blanch, "that in the present instance, he undoubtedly kindled it at the benignant light beaming from the eyes of a young one."

"Pooh, pooh, child!—let my venerable cotemporary have the merit of it! Young

eyes, we all know, can do as much every day; but old ones seldom attain to such honour."

Our visitor now rose to take leave; but stopping short just as he reached the door, and turning to my mother: "I forgot till this moment," cried he, "that I am the bearer of a message to your ladyship from Jane Tourberville, who rests all her hopes of extrication from what is, to her, a very formidable embarrassment, upon your kindness."

"Pray tell me what I can do for her?"

Mr. Tremayne then proceeded to state, that lady Earlsford, (who, with Miss Tourberville and the young Viscount, was to have been of this day's dinner-party at Eastvale) having declined the engagement, on account of indisposition, Jane, who neither dared to stay away, nor yet to enter her grandfather's drawing-room, filled with strangers, unsupported by some female companion, had made him promise to solicit my mother's permission for her to call at Hazleford, and take up some of our party in her way to Sir Reginald's. "She will have Lloyd and Earlsford with

her," concluded he, "but there will be room in the carriage for a fourth, who, she trusts, will be lady or Miss Stavordale. May I tell her—for I am now going to Bovil-Court—that you grant her petition?"

"By all means," said my mother, "but what mode of conveyance have you to Bovil-Court? I see no carriage in waiting; and I think that, having already walked from Eastvale hither, you will be acting very imprudently to extend your peregrination any further. Condescend to let our old coachman drive you in Sir Geoffry's almost *as* antiquated, whisky."

"A thousand thanks; but I have a horse at the gate;—I rode from Eastvale."

"You rode? What, with your arm still in a sling?"

"Why not! I never yet found two arms necessary to manage a horse that required no whipping."

"And do you ride the same animal," cried I, "that Blanch was so sorry for, the day of your accident?"

"Poor Barbary?—No; I am afraid Barbary received some incurable hurt, and will

never be in a condition to carry me again! I am much concerned at it; for he had been in my possession longer than any horse I ever had; and was not only very handsome, but remarkably good-tempered, and yet spirited. My uncle, however, has promised, that, if he becomes useless, he will let him have the run of Eastvale Park during the remainder of his life."

"That is just what I wished to hear," observed Blanch; "but what sort of a courser do you ride now, Mr. Tremayne?"

"Will you do him the honour of going to look at him?"

She consented; but insisted upon my accompanying her. To refuse, would have given importance to the circumstance; and therefore, I went: but Mr. Tremayne, I can easily believe, could well have dispensed with my presence.

The new horse, a beautiful creature, milk white, and apparently full of mettle and sprightliness, was much, and deservedly admired; and I believe, a little envied;—for Blanch longs to become a rider—she asked his name.

Mr. Tremayne had had him so short a time, that he was obliged to refer for it to his groom; who, addressing Blanch, hat in hand, and highly gratified by her praises of the steed, said: "Why, Miss, 'cause he's all white, the gentleman as he belonged to, last, called him Snow-drop, I believe."

"Oh, that is too much like the name of a lady's horse!"

"Then, what *shall* he be called?" enquired his master. "Let him receive from you some more appropriate appellation."

"From me? Well, what think you of Plantagenet? he certainly is of the White Rose faction."

"Plantagenet, then, shall henceforth be his princely denomination. Come, my gallant steed," added he, preparing to mount, "You and your master must away;—you, with alacrity, for your patience seems nearly exhausted—your master with all his customary reluctance!"

Then, vaulting into the saddle, he gracefully made his parting bow, and was out of sight in a moment.

Blanch stood at the gate, listening to the

retreating sound of the horse's hoofs, as long as it could be distinguished; and when it wholly died away in distance, turning to re-enter the house, she exclaimed: "*Oh that I were a man!* Not, however, that I might eat mine enemy's heart in the market-place, as Beatrice was ambitious to do, but that I might spring upon the back of an agile courser, and gallop away with as much fearlessness and velocity as Mr. Tremayne!"

"But I hope," said I, still quoting the words of Shakspeare, "*that because you cannot be a man with wishing*, you will not *die a woman with grieving!*"

"Not (if I can help it) till after this day's dinner at Eastvale?"

"You then look forward to this party with great expectation of pleasure?"

"Yes, dearest Aunt—I own that I do.—Think how many inducements I have to anticipate it with delight!—I never dined out before,—I never was at Eastvale—I want to see lady Horatia Tracy; and I rely so securely upon the kindness of Sir Reginald, that, though I am so young a Nobody, I am

sure that I shall, even in the midst of a large party, feel easy and happy under his roof."

Philippa, when she heard what had been agreed upon respecting Miss Tourberville, expressed much satisfaction at the arrangement: "We shall now," she cried, "make a somewhat less ridiculous figure in the eyes of the servants when we alight at Eastvale. I have been two or three times upon the point of giving up this visit, on account of the odious necessity of having to go six in the same carriage, all dressed out for a ceremonious dinner, and all exposed to the broad day-light stare of a throng of impertinent footmen! And then, the horror of hearing such an enumeration as—'Sir Geoffry and lady Stavordale and *four* Misses Stavordale!' *Oimè!* There were quite Misses enough among us, before this Blanch of ours came to add to the number!"

"Blanch, my dear," cried my mother, "you must do your best to remove this cause of complaint as speedily as possible! Look well about you to-day, and, to oblige your aunt Philippa, neglect no means of making

a conquest of the first good-natured bachelor who may be willing to assist you in changing your name for one more to her taste."

Philippa walked off, not much delighted by this speech; though, after what she herself had said, she could not be greatly surprised that my mother was tempted to make it.

When Miss Tourberville arrived, some of our party were not quite ready, and knowing it to be her wish, that we should all make our appearance at Eastvale at the same time, I was just dispatching a message to her, to request that she would alight, when she and Mr. Tremayne entered the room in which my father, Blanch, and I sat waiting for the others.

"You will be grievously annoyed, I fear, at the sight of me so many times in one day," cried Mr. Tremayne; "but I came with Jane as a substitute for the two *beaux* who were to have formed her escort—Lloyd and Earlsford. They are gone on before us, with Mr. Westcroft, who like ourselves, dines at Eastvale, and in his way thither, called upon my mother, to enquire after her cold."

"There will be room then," said I, "for *two* of our party in your carriage?"

"Yes," answered he; and his eyes most significantly travelled from me to Blanch.—I understood him; and he saw that I did—and the matter seemed tacitly settled. Presently after, observing that I was vainly endeavouring to unscrew the gold top of a smelling-bottle, which resisted all my efforts, he took it from me, and withdrawing his hand from its sling, made use of it with as much ease as of its unhurt companion, to accomplish for me, in a moment, the stubborn operation. Blanch watched his proceedings, and, as he gave me back the bottle, raised the lid of her work-box, and partially producing to view the case containing her *cameos*, said, with a smile, "I think, Mr. Tremayne, though the inglorious sling is not yet wholly discarded, that I may now venture to fulfil that half of the suppliant's prayer which the Fates forbore to disperse.—Will it be any breach of contract to wear these to-day?"

"Oh! no;—but be kinder than the Fates!—Grant the suppliant's whole prayer!" And

as he spoke, he drew the case from its repository, took from it the bracelet, and made an attempt to clasp it round her arm; but she gaily caught it from him, and, in an instant, fixing it on herself, thanked him for his intended assistance, and was off to another part of the room to avoid seeing, I suspect, the disappointed and half reproachful looks with which he regarded her.

My mother and sisters now came down; and having apologized to Miss Tourberville for detaining her, the carriages were rung for, and we soon after departed.

It is difficult to conjecture what may have occasioned it, but certainly poor Jane's physiognomy (if she may be said to have any) looked less contentedly vacant and silly throughout this whole day, than I ever saw it before. I was particularly struck two or three times by the appearance of abstraction that spread itself over her *unintellectual* face, and which gave her precisely, as has been elsewhere said of some pensive simpleton, l'air "*d'un mouton qui rêve.*"—There was no ill-humour, or at least but little, in her unwonted gravity; its character, as well as

I was able to define it, exhibited more of disappointment than of anger; — yet, occasionally, when Mr. Tremayne addressed some questions to her which she was obliged to answer (and she never spoke to him but when thus compelled), the fretful tone of her voice betrayed that to him she attributed, whatever it was, the vexation that oppressed her. Had it not been for the conversation which I had so recently held with him, I should have been tempted to suspect that this captiousness resulted from jealousy of his marked attention to Blanch. My mother interpreted it in that light, and grew somewhat apprehensive, should Blanch perceive it, of the effect which it might produce upon her.

"She is just at an age," whispered my mother, "to fancy it an act of generosity to sacrifice a lover (no matter how distinguished he may be) to the first idiot who, with a dismal look, may seem to reproach her for usurping his affection!"

But my mother, proud and fond as she is of her grand-daughter, does not, I think, even yet, so fully as it deserves, appreciate

the strength of her understanding. Blanch saw the cloud upon Jane Tourberville's brow as plainly as we did; but it affected her with no romantic scruples. She either ascribed it to some petty mortification, foreign to any thing in which *she* had the least concern;—or if, for a moment, she supposed that it took rise in feelings of envy, she was too just to impute the fault to Mr. Tremayne, whom scarcely his own confession, I really believe, could persuade her to think capable of any warmer attachment to Miss Tourberville, than is often known to subsist between cousins; and, therefore, nothing could induce her to suspect, that he had ever given that young lady any rational right to view his conduct towards another with displeasure.

When we were going, the distribution of our party, according to the method which Mr. Tremayne had internally projected, was not found very difficult of accomplishment. Miss Tourberville, Blanch, and I went with himself in the carriage of lady Earlsford; the other four occupied that of my father.

It would be difficult to describe the unaffected ecstacy with which, on one of the

finest antumnal evenings imaginable, Blanch enjoyed the diversified beauties of the drive through Eastvale park, and pointed out with youthful enthusiasm all the spots which would afford to a painter the most favourable station; described the good effect which, in one place, a group of dancing peasants would produce;—in another, the advantage which the scene would derive from being animated by a cavalcade of gay knights and high-born dames returning from the chase;—and, in a third, drew a well-imagined picture of the interest that might be excited by the gloomy appearance of a few armed outlaws, lurking amidst the deep recesses of the surrounding woods, as if awaiting the moment of successfully attacking some unguarded and devoted traveller.

"But in all this variety of prospect," said Mr. Tremayne, "can you not descry a single spot suited for the abode of domestic happiness and love?"

"You have just spoken in time," answered she. "Look at the cheerful glade we are approaching, sheltered at the back by that richly-wooded eminence, and opening in

front to the glowing rays of the western sun, gilding every object on which they rest, and cheering, brightening the whole scene, till it looks as if it wanted nothing but a cottage covered with woodbine, an orchard in full blossom, and a few herds grazing on the banks of the clear stream which intersects it, to become the very Paradise of rural delight and peace!"

"Instead of a cottage," cried I, "what think you of erecting there an elegant little villa, with all the usual accompaniments of garden, green-house, and shrubbery?"

"I could be very happy in either; but the villa, perhaps, would do best for permanent comfort, though it might not look so well upon canvas."

"I must acknowledge," observed Mr. Trmayne, "that I have already, though far from being without some touch of romance, discarded from my visionary schemes of felicity, its most popular of all concomitants—a cottage. The real peasant, when he 'homeward plods his weary way,' may find content in such an abode; he requires little beyond food and rest; and if provided with the

first by a good-humoured affectionate wife, who cheerfully sits down to partake his coarse repast with him; and if defended, while he sleeps, from the inclemency of the weather, it is all he expects—all he has been accustomed to desire. At day-break, he goes forth to his diurnal labour; often eats his scanty meal in the fields; and is, necessarily, as little of a domestic animal, as the horse that draws his plough, and never enters a stable till night. Men of higher intellectual attainments, and born in a less indigent condition, demand superior accommodations, both personal and mental:—they want books, and space to put them in; they want room for the reception of their friends; they require attendants;—they require every thing, in short, which a cottage is least capable of supplying; and I am afraid, would be yet more likely to want the only things that could make such privations supportable—patience and moderation!"

"What a picture!" exclaimed Blanch;—"and yet, it may be a very just one; especially, if men lay it down as a principle, that they cannot exist without a library, an

establishment of domestics, and a succession of visitors!—Who dreams of such luxuries, as associates to happiness in a cottage?"

"No one!—In all our *dreams* on the subject, we set realities at nought; and behold only rosy bowers, in perpetual bloom, and sunshine unobscured by a cloud. We wander amidst Elysian scenes, accompanied by some fair Eve—talk of love the livelong day; subsist upon fruits of our own gathering; are idle without *ennui;* solitary without disgust; and insipid without consciousness!"

"Worse and worse!" cried Blanch, laughing; "such cloying sweetness would surfeit even an Arcadian shepherd and his nymph! —But you deal too much in extremes. Without possessing all the superabundance of a palace, a cottage might be furnished with the means of contributing much more largely than you describe, to rational enjoyment. It might contain *book-cases*, though not *book-rooms;* it might admit a friend; it might be provided with as many servants as were wanted for use, though not for shew;—and it might, in defiance of all your objections, be made a very happy residence!"

"True; as you *now* represent it, I allow that it might be an exquisitely happy one! But then, give it its proper name: call it a house of a moderate size, since you surely have extended its dimensions far beyond the usual proportions of a cottage."

"So then," resumed Blanch, "we have been all this time meaning the same thing?"

"Yes, precisely; and in justice to my taste, you ought not to suppose that it can in fact, ever differ materially from your own!"

"Your most obedient!" cried she, bowing; "but now, say not another word to me, Mr. Tremayne, for at length we are emerging from the woods, and coming within sight of Eastvale House, and I want to look at it without interruption. What a noble structure it is! and how admirably well chosen is the spot upon which it is erected!—just elevated enough to command a varied and delightful prospect, and yet, not placed so high as to make it look bleak or unsheltered,—and how much I like the colonnade that runs along its front! It reminds me of some of the palaces I have seen

in Italy: but there should be niches for busts and statues; and there should be a profusion of orange-trees and myrtles growing amongst them."

"In this country," said Mr. Tremayne, "we are forced to place our statues and busts *within* doors; since ours is not a climate that would be very favourable to their preservation in the open air: nor should we be often tempted to stand and look at them in such exposed situations. For the same reason, our myrtles and orange-trees are removed into green-houses as soon as the suspicion of a frosty-night alarms the gardener; and there they flourish and are defended till the next short-lived summer of this latitude, enables us to bring them securely forth again."

"Oh, now I understand it all; and I think the precautions very reasonable. But really, this climate is much better than I expected to find it; and I can hardly forgive the sarcastic foreigner, who, it has been said, went home, and declared that *three hot days and a thunderstorm* made an English summer!"

"And another, not much more favourable to us," resumed Mr. Tremayne, "as-

serted, that a year in England consisted of nine months of positive winter, and three months of cold weather! But though these are both palpable exaggerations, less intended to gain credit than to excite laughter, you must not flatter yourself that the temperature of every summer in this island, will be as permanently warm as it has been during the present season. A longer residence amongst us will, I fear, teach you, to your sorrow, the vanity of such an expectation."

We were now arrived at the portico of the splendid mansion; and alighting, stood upon the marble steps gazing around with great complacency, whilst my father's carriage drove up, and he and his party descended. Miss Tourberville then put herself under my mother's immediate protection, and we were conducted across a lofty hall, lighted by a cupola, and surrounded with a gallery supported upon pillars, into a spacious and magnificent drawing-room. Here, Sir Reginald and the rest of his guests were already assembled,—and here, much to my private satisfaction, we found an excellent fire.

Our reception was cordial and flattering in

the extreme. Lady Horatia, prepared no doubt to view her nephew's young preserver with partiality, was more than polite, she was even distinguishingly kind to our highly-favoured Blanch, and at first sight seemed to take her to her heart.

The countenance and figure of lady Horatia Tracy are both singularly dignified and commanding. She is tall; and her carriage, without being stiff, is so habitually upright, that, though she is nearly sixty, I never, throughout the whole day, saw her lean back in her chair for an instant; or appear to require any of those personal indulgences—such as footstools and sofa pillows—to which modern fine ladies are so abundantly addicted. Her complexion is so pale, and her features are so perfectly regular, that they communicate to her an air of formality, which perpetually reminds one of a fine face modelled in wax. Yet, at times, it lights up with extraordinary animation, and it is always expressive of strong sense, and acute discernment. Upon the whole, however, she is not a woman whom, without having been previously prepossessed in her favour, I should spontaneously

have liked. She would have inspired me with an idea that her disposition was cold and austere; and, though I might have admired the grandeur of her mien,—have listened, enchanted, to the mellow inflexions of her voice; and have treasured with respect the wise observations that fall from her lips, I should at first sight, have infinitely preferred the warm brilliancy of lady Earlsford's countenance—the frankness of her manners and the apparent sensibility of her character. But what have I since seen in the Viscountess to justify the early partiality which she excited? *Unstable as water*, her conduct to Blanch, which, at the beginning of their acquaintance, was so gracious and conciliating, has become, in proportion as circumstances have strengthened the dear girl's claims to kindness, more and more heartless and distant. She is one, with whom little insinuating attentions—what the French call *prevenances*—weigh ten thousand times more than real, substantial obligations; for she is always more guided by impulse than by principle: and could Blanch, on the day when she dined at Bovil-court, have flattered her

on the subject of Mrs. Tourberville's *Remains of genius*—could she have imitated Jane's mechanical whine of affection—could she, in short, have shaded, with more policy, her superiority of intellect and taste, and have brought them down nearer to the standard of Miss Tourberville's—she might still have maintained, in defiance of the increasing admiration of Mr. Tremayne, a very fair place in his mother's regard. As it is, I am persuaded that she dislikes her quite as much for not being a better courtier as for being in so many respects the rival of her niece. Whatever may be the faults of lady Horatia, I have no apprehension of finding them tinctured by so puerile a contraction of mind.

Miss Tracy is one of the most agreeable creatures with whom I have almost ever met. At the first glance, she scarcely struck me, as being even commonly pretty; but every subsequent look convinced me, that she possesses that undefinable power of pleasing, that nameless grace, before which mere beauty sinks into insignificance. She is little; rather a *brunette*; has no brilliancy of complexion, nor any remarkably handsome

feature in her face: but her play of countenance; its mingled expression of archness and *naïveté*; the sweetness of her smile, and the vivacity of her eyes, enchanted my fancy as much as they gratified my feelings. I immediately conceived the idea that she was amiable in temper, and liberal in mind,—and I immediately began to like her.

During dinner, I had the good-fortune to sit opposite to her, and, at intervals, caught her eye; and whenever she said anything which either of her neighbours (Lord Glenmorne and Mr. Tremayne) chose to dispute, I was applied to for support against them.

One of the causes she undertook, was very difficult to plead; and, with all my good-will to oblige her, I found it impossible to lend her the aid of a vote in its defence. For the pleasure, I suppose, of hearing herself contradicted, she asserted, that complexion was a more indispensable constituent of female beauty, than either features or expression! Both the gentlemen warmly protested against such doctrine; but she told them plainly, that they were partial and disqualified judges: "You, my lord,"

addressing her hideous, but sensible admirer, "are bound, you know, to be the apologist of what you (by selecting a woman who has no complexion to recommend her) are giving presumptive evidence to the world, is your own taste in beauty: *your* opinion, therefore, in this case, ought to go for nothing: and as for Horace, his eye is either satiated by the continual view of his cousin Jane's roses and lilies, or it has feasted so long upon the combined charm of feature, bloom, and expression, in the countenance of Miss Blanch Stavordale, that his discriminating faculties have become confused; and he knows no more to which of these the pre-eminence should be ascribed, than a man who is drinking well-made punch knows how to decide whether it most owes its pleasant flavour to the rum, the sugar, or the lemons which contribute to its composition."

"But *all* men know," cried Mr. Tremayne, "that if the rum were taken away, a very delicious beverage would still remain. Many, my dear Helen, prefer lemonade to punch; and Lord Glenmorne and I prefer features and expression to complexion:"

"Lord Glenmorne has no more right—at least, while he professes to admire *me*—to say a word in favour of features, than of complexion: so, take away from him, either the sugar or the lemons, in addition to the rum, and leave him to do the best he can with the single ingredient then left him. What say you, my lord? are you for *eau sucrée*, or the refreshing acidity of lemon-juice and water?"

"In a fever," replied he, speaking with a most unpleasantly thick and guttural voice, "in a fever I should prefer the cooling draught; but for constant drink, I know not whether water, very pure and sparkling, would not be best, without any mixture whatever."

"Oh, that all men would be equally temperate! This pure and sparkling element, I am to flatter myself,—am I not?—that *I* represent! Jane Tourberville, with her lovely bloom, is the *eau sucrée*; and Miss Blanch Stavordale, correcting the acid by the sweet,—the fiery by the mild—possesses all that constitutes the essence of perfect beauty, or of perfect—punch?"

"So far," cried Mr. Tremayne, "I may

be willing to allow, that you have made out a clear case: but how does all this prove what you began with—the claim to preference which complexion has over features or expression?"

"The assertion proves itself. Look at Jane Tourberville;—is she not a pretty—a *very* pretty girl? Would not every body pronounce her to be such?"

"I believe—yes—they might."

"And what else upon earth has she to recommend her, but a fine skin, and a glowing colour? Now, recall to your mind's eye, my sister, lady Elsmere. Are not her's the most delicately proportioned features that ever were seen? And has she not the sweetest expression in the world? Yet who thinks of calling her handsome, or even pretty? She is pronounced to be interesting—elegant—attracting—*tout ce qu'il vous plaira*; but, owing to her want of complexion, no one ever dreams of saying, that she is beautiful!"

"I give up the word beauty, then; since, according to your theory, it applies only to colour: and colour, according to *my* feelings,

speaks less to the heart than any other component part of female loveliness. A blush, indeed, is often an indication of sentiment, and may awaken tenderness; but permanent red and white upon a human face, affects the soul no more than upon a flower or a china cup. Burke says, *that to form a finished human beauty, and to give it its full influence, the face must be expressive of such gentle and amiable qualities, as correspond with the softness, smoothness, and delicacy of the outward frame.* And elsewhere he adds: *By beauty, I mean that quality which causes love.** Will you not pay some deference, dear Helen, to the authority of *such* a man?"

"*I* hardly dare resist it; but the generality of the world will, you may rest assured!"

During this conversation, Blanch, (though seated next to Sir Reginald at the bottom of the table, and often obliged to devote to him her exclusive attention, as he was perpetually addressing her) found leisure occasionally to listen to what was said by others; and frequently, I remarked, tried particularly hard

* Sublime and Beautiful. Pages 130 and 178.

to hear what was passing between Mr. Tremayne and his lively cousin. Whether she ever succeeded, I can scarcely decide; but the continual direction of her eyes towards them, at last, drew the notice of Miss Tracy, as it had long attracted that of her neighbour. She invited her by signs to pledge them, at the moment they were each going to take wine. Blanch understood the purport of the dumb-shew, and immediately complied with the intimation. Her bow, her smile, in doing this, were graceful and sweet beyond my power of language to describe. Miss Tracy was struck by the heightened charm which her manner of going through this little ceremony diffused over her countenance. She looked at me as she set down her glass, and with unaffected warmth, said:

"I have yet seen nothing to compare with her! She makes me a convert to the very doctrine I have been disputing! She proves to me, that Burke's idea of finished human beauty is strictly correct. What a smile she gave us! It was the very essence of those qualities which he describes as the causes of affection!"

"And they are all, at this moment, reflected in you!" cried lord Glenmorne, gazing delightedly at her animated aspect.

"Are they," said she, laughing—"upon my word, I am very glad to know that there is so cheap a way of procuring an essence so invaluable."

"It is cheap to you," subjoined Mr. Tremayne, "because candour and liberality never cost you any effort to dispense."

"Take care, take care, my good friends! You are pursuing an excellent method of teaching me to lay traps for approbation!... But what are they talking of at the bottom of the table? Poor Jane is listening with a face whence the roses have so completely disappeared, that one might almost question whether they had ever flourished there! Her eyes are filled with tears! My dear Horace, what *can* be the matter?"

Horace, without answering her, looked steadily towards the place where Miss Tourberville sat; and, at length, encountering from her an accidental glance, the expression with which she saw herself contemplated seemed absolutely to transfix her:—the tear

which had trembled in her eye, remained, as if spell-bound, within its lid, and gradually dried away: — she sat motionless — panic-struck — scarcely appearing to breathe — and but for the rapid variations of her colour, one might have been tempted to think, that she had undergone a sudden transformation into stone! When I withdrew my gaze from her and regarded Mr. Tremayne, I could trace no severity upon his brow to account for the extraordinary effect he had produced; his air was placid, though serious; and the first instant that she was able again to meet his eye, a smile full of kindness and encouragement was directed towards her, that appeared to revive her confidence, and restore her to her natural state.

"What in the world, Horace, is the meaning of all this?" cried Miss Tracy, who, as well as myself had attentively viewed the whole of this mute transaction,—"are you gifted with the power of Medusa? For mercy's sake, never

——'try the virtue of that Gorgon face
To stare me into stone!" *

* Dryden.

He laughed; and telling her that she would make a very graceful statue, and therefore had the less cause to dread the potency of his art, he hastened to change the conversation.

I afterwards enquired of Blanch, (whose vicinity to Miss Tourberville might have given her an opportunity of understanding the original cause of that young lady's agitation,) what *she* knew about the matter? but I gained little information through her means. She could only tell me, that poor Jane had looked miserably out of spirits during the whole meal; that she had several times addressed her, and had been scarcely able to draw from her a word; and that, when her emotion became so apparent, the conversation was of so uninteresting a kind (at least to Blanch), that she had not the least recollection of its subject.

When the ladies quitted the eating-room, Mr. Tremayne, whilst holding the door as they passed, found an opportunity of whispering a few words to Jane, which brought half a smile to her lips, and half a blush to her cheeks; and made her, for the moment,

look really pretty. Blanch seemed pleased to behold her thus re-animated; and taking her arm, and gaily chatting to her, they proceeded together to the drawing-room.

I have said nothing of those guests of the Baronet, whose faces and manners said nothing to me. There were two or three young men, one of them (a Mr. Elsmere, brother-in-law to lady Horatia's new son-in-law,) come down to shoot; and there were two or three more mature-looking personages, come down, perhaps, to enjoy Sir Reginald's good cheer; and a young coquettish widow, sometimes trying to be a sparkler, and at others studying to be a languishing beauty. Her wit, however, was pertness, and her graces were affectation.

In a bachelor's or a widower's house, however splendidly it may be fitted up,—gilt, fringed, carved, and painted, it is remarkable what a deficiency there always is of those amusing and tasteful decorations which usually appear in the habitations of women of fashion. Not a single object presented itself in the superb drawing-room at Eastvale, that was not precisely placed there for use. The very chim-

ney-piece was devoid of all ornaments, save the crystal lustres containing wax-lights: no china, no flowers, no fanciful or classical little figures, not even a French time-piece was to be seen. Every table was in its proper place, and perfectly unincumbered; the sofas all stood with their backs close to the walls, and the very fire-skreens were of so ponderous and magnificent a description, that they seemed to be stationed on each side of the chimneys rather as things intended, like the fender and rug, to be permanent occupants, than to be removed, on any occasion from their place. Miss Tracy told me, that she had heard from her mother, that, in Mrs. Tourberville's time, the house was crowded with fanciful embellishments; "she had," she said, "fashionable nicknacks, and expensive toys, and *gages d'amitié*, and sentimental emblems in every room in the house; but Sir Reginald has, long since, caused them all to swept away: he did not love her; and therefore, I suppose, he loved nothing that brought her to his remembrance."

"Yet surely, he might have substituted, for the costly trifles which he discarded,"

said Blanch, "a few ornaments, less showy, of his own chusing. This large and lofty room, with nothing in it but chairs and tables, looking-glasses and curtains, has really an air of destitution, that damps the spirits; and, but for that bright fire (the only thing that gives any idea of comfort), we might all fancy ourselves brought by mistake into a stately audience chamber, intended for use merely on days of *gala* and public ceremony. It has not, in the least, the appearance of an apartment for a family to assemble in. I like my ideal cottage in the park," added she, turning to me "a million of times better!"

"It is not often," said Miss Tracy, "that it is applied to family purposes. Sir Reginald, when alone, or when his party is very small, either sits in the library, or in what is called the little drawing-room. Both are more cheerful than this formal place, but both demand the aid of female taste to make them pleasantly habitable. If Horace *would* but depose his cousin Charles,—assume the name of Tourberville, consent to his own nomination as heir of Eastvale; and take such a wife as his uncle should approve—*she*

might metamorphose the house from top to bottom, and convert every room in it, if she chose, into a china-shop, or a magazine for toys!"

"I hope that, upon terms which would do him so little honour," cried Blanch, with an indignant glow at the mere suggestion, "he will never possess either the name, the wife, or the estate!"

"I quite agree with you in that hope," cried Miss Tracy, looking at her with an approving smile, "and love you sincerely for your honest warmth!" Then, snatching her hand, "Do you know, fair Blanch," continued she, "that I have irrevocably determined to win you for my fast friend?"

"Have you?" said Blanch, laughing, yet evidently much flattered—"I am exceedingly glad to hear it!"

"That answer is delightful!—Thank you dear girl, for not freezing me with a polite '*Ma'am, you do me great honour!*' Half the Misses I am acquainted with, would have used that petrifying phrase, and sent me shivering to the fire, like a wretch chilled

by the sudden dash of a glass of cold water in her face!"

A domestic now entered, who, approaching lady Horatia, said something to her in too low a voice for us to overhear; and on her answering—"Very well," immediately went out again.

"What has Harris been announcing to you, Mamma?" cried Miss Tracey.

"That the picture-gallery has been lighted by his master's order, and that there is an excellent fire in the music-room."

Miss Tracy started up; and taking the hand of Blanch, cried: "Come then; *you* shall be *my* charge: I know that you are fond of painting, and that you draw well yourself. Horace told me so; and I shall therefore be doubly gratified in doing the honours of Sir Reginald's collection to you. Miss Stavordale," continued she, addressing me, "will you like to go with us?"

I readily answered in the affirmative, and we directly proceeded to the gallery; lady Horatia and several of the other guests followed us more at leisure.

In the noble apartment which we now en-

tered, and found brilliantly illuminated, rather than merely "lighted," there were, in addition to an admirable selection of pictures, a few beautiful specimens of ancient and modern sculpture. Blanch was quite in her element amidst these treasures: they brought Italy, and all its works of art (so familiar to her during the two years which she had spent at Florence), forcibly back to her remembrance; she was touched, as by the sight of old friends; she distinguished the characteristic marks of almost every master's style; she could name the painters, and quote some popular *bon mot*, or relate some interesting anecdote of each; and she contemplated their productions with the pride of a compatriot, and the veneration for genius of hereditary taste.

By degrees, we were left in exclusive possession of the gallery; every one else repairing to the music-room. Blanch, though very loth to retire, became apprehensive of encroaching upon Miss Tracy's good nature, and several times proposed to give up, for the present, the further gratification of her curiosity, and to join the rest of the party

but Miss Tracy would not hear of it: "No," she cried, "I cannot bear to withdraw you from a place which you not only so highly enjoy yourself, but possess the art of teaching *me* to enjoy more than I ever did before. Your *historiettes* of many of these artists are charming; and give me a greater degree of interest while looking at their works, than the wisest professional critic could have excited.—Besides, except Miss Philippa Stavordale's (whose singing I have heard much admired), there is not one of the ladies now in the music-room, whose performance would give me the smallest pleasure. The two Honourable spinsters (Lady Balfour's daughters) play harp and piano-forte duets, which never go in tune or time together; and the little *sémillante, agaçante* widow, Mrs. St. Clair, sings, or rather shrieks, Scotch and Irish melodies, which I neither like very much in themselves, nor think at all improved by her manner of *executing* them—by the way, I have been guilty of a pun; but it was unintentionally, I assure you. And now, dear Blanch, go on with your remarks; and let me remain with you in peace and comfort.

What are you looking at there, so attentively? Are you, *enfin*, at a fault? Cannot you make out who was the painter of that great dingy composition?"

"Oh, do not speak of it so irreverently! It is full of expression: but I am acquainted neither with the subject, nor the artist. Is it not a modern picture?"

"It is: here is the catalogue. The subject is from Shakespeare's King John, Act iii. Sc. 3. but the artist's name is not down."

"I wish we had the play here," cried Blanch; "I should like to read, whilst standing before it, the scene to which the picture refers."

"In happy time, here comes a ready *servitore!*" exclaimed Miss Tracy; "my dear Horace," added she, addressing Mr. Tremayne (who at that moment was seen advancing towards us from the further end of the gallery)—"Go to the library, and look for the Play of King John—and then come and read to us a scene which we particularly want to hear."

"It is hard to be driven away, the moment I have succeeded in tracing you," cried Mr. Tremayne; "but since you authorize me to return, your commands shall be obeyed."

"I hope they would have been obeyed at all events! But pray go directly; for as you men have quitted the dinner-room, we may expect a summons every minute, and have no time to lose."

He immediately departed on the commission assigned him; and presently reappearing with the volume in his hand, gave it to his cousin that she might look for the passage in question; and when she had found it, he read to us, with incomparable effect, the famous dialogue between King John and Hubert, in which the crafty monarch, first winning his agent by promises and flattery, then by slow approaches, sounding his disposition to undertake a deed of horror—at last, ventures to suggest to him the murder of young Arthur. This scene, so finely worked up, yet requiring, either in an actor or a painter, so much power of expression to represent with full effect, had, in the picture before us, been treated with all the vigour of imagination, aided by skilfulness of hand, which can embody passion, and give to the descriptive powers of the poet their appropriate 'form and pressure.' The countenance of

John made one shudder: there was a lurking cruelty in the sidelong glance of his eye, suspiciously directed towards Hubert, to discern the impression which his discourse had produced, that was really appalling: and the aspect of Hubert himself, still more ill-favoured, and scarcely less villainous, awakened the most painful apprehensions for the fate of Arthur; who, full of grace and beauty, but with an air of sadness, is seen at some distance in conference with the dowager queen.

We all united in thanking Mr. Tremayne very cordially, for the pleasure which his admirable style of reading had afforded us; and I then ventured to propose our adjourning to the drawing-room.

"Two minutes—grant me two minutes more," cried Miss Tracy, "and I will go wherever you please!—Horace," continued she, "let me look again at that volume in your hand. I think there is in King John a Princess Blanch (I forget whether she is worth caring for;—I rather believe not), of whom a dear poetical Citizen of Angiers (I wonder, by the way, what trade he followed!)

says such pretty things, that, before I leave this room, I *must* find his speech. If my memory does not fail me, it is one which might very justly apply *here*:"—and as she spoke she patted the cheek of Blanch, and regarded her with an affectionate smile, that drew upon herself, from the eyes of Mr. Tremayne, a look of the most animated kindness. "Oh, here," resumed she, after a momentary search, "here is my friend, the civic Apollo's speech!—Now listen, gentles, all:

'If youthful Love should go in quest of beauty,
Where should he find it fairer than in Blanch?'

"*Cela ne nous convient pas mal!*" observed the lively Helen, interrupting herself:—then proceeding:—

"If zealous Love should go in quest of virtue,
Where should he find it purer than in Blanch?
If Love ambitious sought a match of birth,
Whose veins bound richer blood than lady Blanch?'

"Do you know yourself in this pretty picture, my dear little blushing friend?" said Miss Tracy, closing the book, and turning her good-humoured face towards Blanch.

"I hope I am not so vain!—But do you fancy that *you* know me in what is said of the high birth, and rich blood of the lady Blanch in the play?"

"Why, to be sure, you are not a Princess!—But the daughter of an ancient English Baronet's eldest son, and of a well born foreign lady, is not a personage to be looked down upon in this country, *aristocratical* as it may be thought!"

"Change *well-born* for *well-educated*, Miss Tracy. My mother was only the daughter of an artist."

The simple sincerity of this speech, not uttered as a confession, but merely as the statement of a fact, was beyond what even *I* had anticipated. I well knew that Blanch would submit to wear no borrowed plumage,—would allow herself to be invested with no false dignity;—but that she would, in the presence of Mr. Tremayne, so calmly address to one of his nearest relations the explicit declaration of her mother's humble station, I own, surprised me. It for a moment struck Miss Tracy dumb! She looked at at me,—she looked at her cousin, who, it is

true, appeared a little anxious; but far from shocked, or even embarrassed. It was plain that he knew the circumstance which Blanch had just stated, perfectly well before: his anxiety was the mere result of his incertitude as to the manner in which its disclosure would be received by Helen.—The first sentence she uttered, decided the business:

"My dearest girl," cried she, recovering her presence of mind, "no matter whose daughter your mother was! We all see in you a creature to love and admire most warmly!—so, say no more about rich blood or poor blood. There *are* persons in the world, before whom, highly as your personal merit must always be valued, the subject, perhaps, had better be avoided."

"This hint very naturally instigated Blanch to enquire, *who* the persons were to whom her new friend alluded.

"Oh, never mind who I may fancy they are!—take my advice; and finally dismiss the subject."

"You would not give me such counsel, dear Miss Tracy, if you had *known* my mother!—She was not highly born, I own;

but I am prouder of having been *her* daughter, than I should be of owing my birth to the most dignified and exalted peeress in the list of your English nobles!—Tell me, however, I again intreat, *who* are the individuals before whom you think it would be imprudent to publish my lineage?"

Anxious to dissuade her from further enquiry, Mr. Tremayne now gently said:

"Why press for information, lovely Blanch, which Helen can only give conjecturally, and may, perhaps, without intending it, give incorrectly? It is scarcely fair to require that names should be affixed to merely suppositious offenders!"

Just then, lady Horatia Tracy and lord Glenmorne entered the gallery.

"My dear children," cried the former, addressing herself to her daughter and nephew, "you are prolonging your absence from the drawing-room beyond all reasonable bounds.—Sir Reginald would have accompanied me himself, to withdraw you from these academical contemplations, could he have shaken off poor lady Balfour, who is

in the midst of one of her interminable stories, and leaves him no possibility of escape."

"I wish him joy!" cried Helen, laughing. "He is fallen into good hands; and we may calculate upon his being detained for the next three quarters of an hour at least. And the best of it is, that when, at last, he finds himself released, he will no more be able to tell what her story has been about, than we, who did not hear it!—She begins, by talking of some dead or living friend of hers, who, she remembers, in some peculiar year, did or said something remarkable, which, for a while, you fancy she is going to record;—but, no such thing. The date of the year reminds her, that it was about the very time when that terrible earthquake happened in Peru. She proceeds to relate an extraordinary circumstance connected with that catastrophe; but the word America puts her in mind of the United States; and she flies off to General Washington; and from General Washington, she travels post to Paris, to tell you something about General la Fayette, whose love of farming brings her back to England, and the late Duke of Bedford; and she then

commences a history of his agricultural experiments at Woburn; when by some magical process, her thoughts diverge to Ireland, where his successor held the appointment of Lord Lieutenant;—and before you can possibly divine how all this is connected with what she set out intending to say, she carries you in a balloon to Seringapatam,—takes you in a trice to the South of France, and, forgetting how long she has already kept you in hot water, plunges you up to the chin in the warm baths of Bagneres!—Now, dearest Madam, have I not given a very accurate abridgment of her usual style of story-telling."

"A very saucy one, at least!—But come; the card-tables are set, and Sir Reginald is longing to dispose around them all those whom he suspects to be unworthy of the high treat which he has in view both for himself and me."

"I think I can guess," said Mr. Tremayne, "in what this hoped-for treat is to consist; and I shall take especial care not to venture too near a card-table."

We now all quitted the delightful gallery,

and repaired to the drawing-room, where the tea was handing round; and where lady Balfour's aërial travels had not yet entirely terminated. Sir Reginald's countenance, however (for it was to him that she was still addressing herself) plainly told that he knew not one word she was saying; but was wandering in imagination, as widely from what she was talking about, as she was herself wandering from her original subject. My mother was composedly conversing with Mr. Westcroft, and one of Sir Reginald's elderly guests;—Philippa, looking 'beautiful with all her might,' was laying desperate siege to the heart of Mr. Elsmere; my father, in a remote part of the room, had good-naturedly engaged in a game of cribbage with Jane Tourberville; and Martha was learning the newest fashion of being conceited and *minaudière* from Mrs. St. Clair, whose airs and graces whilst flirting with two lively young men, she was assiduously watching. Mr. Lloyd came and sat down by me; and lord Earlsford, full of his approaching tour, went and talked to his brother, about the route which he would advise him to pur-

sue, the best places to stop at, and the most amusing Itinerary to take in his chaise.

The exit of the servants with the tea-things was the signal for Sir Reginald and lady Horatia to rise and begin the labour of making up the card-tables. Being both of the old school, they thought it necessary to take a good deal of personal trouble in the business; and before they forsook their guests, chose to see them all provided with the means of contributing to their own entertainment. In more modern houses, less ceremony is generally deemed requisite: the tables are set, and people are left to play or not, according as they have courage to go about and select their associates, and influence to arrange all the customary preliminaries. This does very well for those who, confident of their importance, make no scruple of calling upon others to assist in promoting their amusement; but it is a miserable plan for those, who, either from situation or character are diffident and unenterprising.

Having conscientiously fulfilled, towards the majority of his visitors, the duties of an attentive host, Sir Reginald permitted the

select remainder to attend him and Blanch, (whose arm he drew within his own) to the music-room.—When there, he besought her to gratify the earnest wish of lady Horatia, to hear her sing; and on her consenting, placed before her two or three compositions that were particular favourites of his, requesting her to select one from amongst them for her performance. She pitched upon an exquisite *Cantata*, in which the mixture of *recitative* and air, allowed scope for the exertion, as well of her pathetic, as impassioned powers; and never did I hear her do greater justice to her own talents! The room was admirably adapted to display all the brilliancy, compass, and flexibility of her voice; the softest accent, gradually melting almost into a sigh, was distinctly heard; and a sustained note swelled by minute degrees, acquired such fulness and volume, that a body of sound, strengthening as it arose, seemed to diffuse itself through the air as if the whole space was filling with life, with sensibility, and vocal sweetness. There was no officious echo to double the tones and confuse their clearness; all was the result of the skilful con-

struction of the room, and the magical abilities of the performer. She saw, she felt that she was eminently successful in her efforts to please the little audience assembled round her; and what stronger incitement can we have to aim at excellence, than the conviction that our exertions give delight to those, in whose approbation we most delight ourselves? Once or twice, during the performance, her eye involuntarily met the enraptured eye of Mr. Tremayne; and whenever this happened, the prettiest indication of a smile (for it did not amount to a smile direct) played about her mouth, and discovered itself in her eyes, which it is possible to imagine: but she quickly looked away; afraid, probably, of putting herself out, and bringing her song to too abrupt and unprepared a close.

Nothing could be more warm and animated, than the thanks and praises which she received when her exertions terminated. Lady Horatia, who, without being so profound a critic as Sir Reginald, seems equally fond of music, kissed the young performer, and, in terms the most flattering,

assured her, that, much as her expectations had been raised, she had so greatly surpassed them, as to prove, that previous applause is not always so injurious to its object as has been represented. Miss Tracy also came forward with her zealous and ready tribute of admiration; and whilst she was speaking, I heard the Baronet (after expressing to lady Horatia his satisfaction at the perfect conformity of their sentiments) say in a low voice, as he glanced his eye towards Blanch: "Of whom does she remind you?"

The answer was in a tone too inaudible for me to distinguish; but I saw that it was such as to agree exactly with his anticipations; and he immediately added:

"So extraordinary a similarity in style and expression between two persons, strangers to each other, proves how general is the diffusion of good taste in Italy; and how difficult it is for one singer of merit in that country, not to acquire some of the characteristic refinements of another. Would that we had more of this national excellence amongst us!"

Mr. Elsmere now sauntered into the room, looking ineffably languid and fine; and told

lady Horatia, with as much *nonchalance* as if he had said, 'The rubber is over,' that Mrs. St. Clare had had the misfortune to set fire to her hair at one of the candles; that she was extremely terrified, though but little injured, and wanted *sal volatile* and salts, and all the usual restoratives administered to fainting beauties!

Lady Horatia instantly left the room, followed by almost the whole party; and Miss Tracy, as she went out, said to Mr. Elsmere,

"What an inhuman creature you are, to come and announce to us such a disaster with so unconcerned a countenance!—Why it may cost Mrs. St. Clair a new wig!"

"Did you know, then, that she wore one?"

"No; but I fancy that *you* know it now, past all possibility of doubt!"

His reply to this, they were, by this time, too far off for me to hear; and turning to Blanch, (who lingered at the instrument to examine the remaining contents of the music-book out of which she had been singing), I was beginning to press her to go back with

me to the drawing-room, when Sir Reginald, who stood beside her, and observed that no one remained in the apartment but ourselves, took her hand; and drawing her gently towards him, said, as he tenderly embraced her:

"You must make my Horace amends, dear girl, for compelling me to divide the affection which has hitherto been so exclusively his own!—You must love him, sweet Blanch!"

On hearing this most unexpected exhortation, a momentary ray of the brightest joy flashed from the eyes—a blush, vivid as it was transient, rose to the cheeks of the agitated Blanch; who, however, the next instant, losing the animation that for so brief an interval had transported her, grew pale, sunk into dejection, and with much emotion answered:

"Ah, Sir Reginald!—You would be far from wishing that I should obey the injunction which you have just addressed to me, were the mistake cleared up, which, I believe, leads you to imagine that my connexions in Italy were so much higher in rank,

than was really the case!—Their talents were their sole distinction; they even depended for subsistence upon their exertions: and in his latter years, my grandfather, blind and poor, was maintained by the bounty of his English son-in-law!"

This unqualified acknowledgment, addressed to such an auditor, at the very moment when her dearest hopes were all at stake—I own, touched me most sensibly. It seemed the very heroism of sincerity! My anxiety, during the few moments that Sir Reginald continued silent after she ceased speaking, was even painfully intense:—But how shall I describe the extreme delight with which I presently saw him (recovering from the mingled wonder and admiration which had, at first, deprived him of utterance) snatch her to his breast, while, with moistened eyes, he exclaimed:

"Admirable Blanch!—Who, that sees and hears you, can think any thing wanting which adventitious circumstances could supply to give value and dignity to your personal and mental recommendations? Where are the vain prejudices in favour of family, that

would not vanish before the influence of a character so honourable and so ingenuous as yours?—Whatever may have been your maternal descent, your own excellence ennobles you; and, in addition to that, your claim, in right of your father, to the rank of an English gentleman's daughter, no illiberality could contest!"

Bathed in tears—but tears, obviously, of joy, Blanch, with the fearless fondness of a cherished child, threw her arms round the aged Baronet's neck, and gratefully exclaimed:

"Oh, what inexpressible relief you have given me dear, dear Sir Reginald, by the kindness of this speech!—I have long been alarming myself with apprehensions, that the mother whom I still revere above all human beings, whose virtues, conduct, talents, and understanding, will always be my boast and admiration,—and to whose precepts and example I owe every little merit which you so partially exaggerate;—I have been tormenting myself with fear, that this mother—the only excuse I ever had for pride—would

be disdained when the lowliness of her birth came to be known, and would, perhaps, excite reflections, which I could not have heard, even from *you*, dearest Sir, without grief and indignation!—Such injustice would almost have taught me to hate this country; though that of my father;—at least, it would, assuredly, have deeply embittered my regret at having been compelled to quit the more generous land of my mother!"

"You formed of us a very harsh opinion, my dear little misjudging friend," cried Sir Reginald, smiling, but much affected by the energy of her filial attachment: "We are not so furiously bigoted to ancestry, as to insist, that even females, before we condescend to admit them to the honour of forming an alliance with our sons or nephews, should produce a pedigree six hundred years old; and a coat of arms loaded with as many quarterings as a German Baron's!—But here comes Horace in search of us, with a face full of wonder at our long secession.—Shall I tell him, dear girl, the nature of the cause, which at the beginning of this conversation,

I undertook to plead, and then, leave him to exert his own eloquence in urging it?"

"He knows," replied Blanch, withdrawing her hand from the Baronet's, and running, half-laughing, out of the room,—"he knows that I would not hear him!"

"Has he, then," said Sir Reginald, addressing me, whilst, with a smile, his eyes followed her retreating steps,—"has he, then, been anticipating my application?"

"Not quite in terms so explicit," answered I; "but on some subjects, you know, Sir Reginald, the comprehension of a young and pretty woman is peculiarly alert; and Blanch did not even attempt to disguise, this morning, that she perfectly understood the ambiguously-expressed meaning of certain intimations thrown out by Mr. Tremayne."

"And did she declare herself adverse to the hopes which those intimations implied?"

"She prohibited their being again alluded to so long as his mother shall continue disinclined to sanction them."

Casting a glance round the room, to ascertain whether his nephew still remained within hearing, and perceiving that he had

followed the traces of Blanch, Sir Reginald, in a confidential tone of voice, said, as he drew nearer to me:

"I should be loth, in the presence of Horace, to say any thing to the disparagement of his mother. He loves her, though he cannot, assuredly, think very highly of her judgment; and I never allow myself to give him the pain of hearing me openly express my opinion either of her present system or future plans. But I am not therefore the less determined to oppose those plans, nor the less inclined to condemn her system. Horace shall never sacrifice himself to her exclusive and infatuated partiality for Jane. Good Heaven! How extraordinary is it that, with an understanding, which, though not clear, is yet far from being slow or imbecile, she should so completely fail to perceive that the very event which she wishes with such ardour to bring about for the advantage of her niece, is the one of all others, which, accomplished without my participation, would the most effectually ensure that niece's ruin! She thinks, that as I do not greatly profess to love her *protegée*, I shall leave her en-

tirely to her father's mercy at my death; and that, from him, still young enough to remarry, Jane stands a bad chance of inheriting much of the family property, and may, in case a son shall be born, succeed to nothing beyond the four or five thousand pounds that were her mother's. My regard for Horace, lady Earlsford has construed into a fixed determination of bequeathing to him a magnificent legacy. She entertains an opinion that I have saved money, and made considerable landed acquisitions for Horace's future benefit: accordingly, whether or not he ever succeeds to the Eastvale property, his marriage with Jane *must* be advantageous to her. But all this is miscalculated. I am so utterly inimical to her views, that were such an union to take place, she would find, that not even my affection for Horace, warm as it is, had availed to preserve either him or Jane from being totally excluded from my succession! I do not love, or think well of the blood from which poor Jane is maternally descended; and I have told my sister, but hitherto told her in vain, that if she persists and succeeds

in the endeavour to unite these young people, they will both suffer for it to the fullest extent of my power!—What, then, is Blanch doing by refusing, in deference to his mother, to listen to his vows?—She is prolonging the persecution which he hourly endures in the cause of a girl whom he does not love,—who is every way unfitted to make him happy, and who will be the means, if she becomes his wife, of depriving him of whatever accession of fortune he might otherwise have obtained in testimony of my favour and attachment.—Represent the affair to her, my dear Miss Stavordale, in this, its only true and just light;—and tell her, that if the animated blush which rushed to her cheek this evening, when I asked her to love my nephew, is any indication that she *could* or *does* love him, the kindest thing she could do, would be to accept his hand at once; and to deliver both him and me from the odious importunities with which we are incessantly harassed on Jane's behalf!"

Favourable as this speech was to Blanch, there was too much inveteracy in it against his grand-daughter to give me unmixed plea-

sure. He could bring against her no one personal accusation;—the worst he had to say of her was, that her mother had displeased him, and that, not by her misconduct, but chiefly, I well knew, on account of her having happened to differ from him in some of her opinions. How unjustifiable a reason for loathing the daughter!—Poor girl!—Is there a subject on earth upon which *she* would venture to oppose his will?—Certainly not. Her being pressed upon the acceptance of Mr. Tremayne, is no act of hers;—neither, I believe, is it even her secret wish. She is a passive instrument in the hands of lady Earlsford, some part of whose vehement affection, I doubt not, derives its glow from the opposition which it encounters, and which her pride piques itself upon holding out against, and eventually overcoming. The rest takes its rise in the weakness of character which impels her, as I have already observed, to attach so much undue importance *aux petits soins*,—so much illusive value to certain habitual tones of fondness, too mechanical to be proofs of sterling regard,

and too unmeaning to merit even the reproach of flattery.

Before we took our leave, the eager entreaties of Miss Tracy, seconded and enforced by the joint invitation of Lady Horatia and Sir Reginald, obtained from my mother a promise that Blanch should return to Eastvale the following morning, to become their guest for some days. This arrangement was made however without the immediate participation of Blanch, who, at the moment, was conversing with Mr. Westcroft in a distant part of the room, and knew nothing of what had been decided upon, till Miss Tracy and I went up to inform her. On first hearing the intelligence, it was evident that it gave her unalloyed pleasure; but in a countenance which so intelligibly reflects every emotion of the mind that informs it, nothing could be easier than it was to perceive, that an almost immediate change occurred in her feelings: and before she had spoken a word, both Miss Tracy and I were aware, that there was something in the scheme, which, on reflection, gave her disturbance.

"What now?" cried that young lady, re-

garding her with an air of disappointment—"What disagreeable scruple are you revolving in your naughty little head?—I hope you do not mean to inflict upon me the mortification of refusing to come to us?"

"You are kinder to me a thousand times than I deserve," said Blanch, gratefully taking her hand:—"But allow me to ask, is it just, that I, who have no connection with the Tourberville family, and am, comparatively speaking, a stranger to you all, should be selected to become a sort of permanent guest at Eastvale, whilst Sir Reginald's granddaughter is passed by, and left to carry the news home to her aunt, that a little vagabond upstart has been preferred before her? Lady Earlsford is already far from being partial to me:—I do not think that her love will be much increased by this!"

Miss Tracy, looking somewhat perplexed, turned to me, and said, "What shall we do, dear Miss Stavordale, with this impracticable niece of yours? Much as I admire the delicacy of her feelings with respect to Jane Tourberville, there is not the smallest chance that those of Sir Reginald can ever

be enticed to follow in the same track. Jane has not, I believe, slept a night beneath his roof since her father quitted England; and I know not that even my mother, though she is one of his oldest and most privileged friends, would chuse to venture upon the experiment of asking him, all at once, to invite her here as an inmate."

"I should not be afraid to do it," said Blanch, "if I thought that there was any probability of succeeding.—I do not mind," added she, with a smile, "appearing a little arrogant, because, as I know that I have the good fortune to stand high in Sir Reginald's favour, I look upon it, in some degree, as a duty to exert the influence which he allows me, for the benefit of those who are less indulgently treated. I should fearlessly apply to him in any case that related to my *own* advantage; why, then, should I hesitate to solicit him in behalf of another?"

Mr. Tremayne now came up to us, and Miss Tracy briefly acquainted him with the subject under discussion, asking his opinion of the meditated application to his uncle.

"I think," replied he, evidently much gratified by such a proof of considerate feeling for poor Jane, "that whatever request Miss Blanch Stavordale chose to address to him, would instantly be granted; but I likewise think, that in the present case, the grant would not answer its hoped-for end:—it would not contribute to Jane's comfort. She endures too much restraint under her grandfather's eye, to wish herself established here (particularly unaccompanied by my mother) as a resident. It would far more gratify her," added he, turning to me, "to become an occasional guest at Hazleford. Will you, my dear Miss Stavordale, undertake to procure for her this advantage? You know not in how many ways you would be serving her by such an exertion of your influence."

It occurred to me, that amongst other reasons which he might have for making this request, one was, the encreasing frequency of the visits of Mr. Maurice Villiers at Bovil Court. I therefore immediately told him that I could answer for the readiness with which my mother and sisters would unite with me in soliciting lady Earlsford to let

her niece be with us as often as suited with her other engagements. He thanked me; and Blanch, convinced by what he had said that her scheme had been injudicious, gave it up—infinitely to Miss Tracy's satisfaction.

Late as it was when we reached home, I would not defer till the next morning communicating to Blanch the substance of my conversation with the Baronet. She heard me without interruption to the end, and when I paused, laughingly answered: "Sir Reginald is determined that his partiality shall not make me too vain! How little pains he takes to conceal, that it owes at least one half of its fervour to his rooted antipathy to poor Jane. I wonder that with such bitterness of prejudice at heart, he can still contrive to excite so much attachment, and even respect. If I only knew him by report, and had no personal acquaintance with him, I should be tempted to imagine that he must be detestable! What *can* be more shocking than all this implacable virulence against his unoffending grandchild? He hates her, he says, for the maternal blood that runs in her veins! In good truth, it would be more reasonable to hate her for the sins of her father!

However, it is not my business to set Sir Reginald's faults in array before him. He is certainly very kind to me; and though I pity poor Jane, I should in vain try to hate him half so much as he deserves! Tell him therefore, for his comfort, my dear aunt, (should he ever renew the conversation of this evening) that I, Blanch Stavordale, take it upon me confidently to aver, that Mr. Tremayne requires not the safe-guard of my protection to be perfectly secure from all danger of ever marrying Miss Tourberville. His mother may tease him by pleading *for*, and his uncle by pleading *against* her: but unless he is provoked to it by illiberal threats, and unnecessary vehemence of opposition, I do believe, that he would just as soon think of uniting himself to my worthy Clavering, as to his fair cousin!"

This was all I could draw from her upon the subject; and as it was now nearly one o'clock in the morning, I left her to her repose, and retired to my own.

About two hours after breakfast the next day, Miss Tracy and Mr. Tremayne on horseback, and lord Glenmorne in his curricle, appeared at our gate. The two former

were come as the escort of Blanch to Eastvale, and the latter as her charioteer; Mr. Tremayne not having yet recovered sufficient strength in his arms to venture upon the task of driving her himself. They alighted, on seeing my mother at the dressing-room window, and paid her a visit of nearly half an hour. Miss Tracy expressed her admiration in high terms of the beauty of our prospect;—she liked the size, shape, and aspect of our rooms;—praised the drawings which are hung round them;—touched the piano-forte, and declared it excellent;—won my father's heart by extolling the neatness of his fences, and the flourishing appearance of his plantations;—gratified Philippa by significant allusions to the impression which she had made upon Mr. Elsmere;—tried hard to say something agreeable to Martha, but not knowing how, made it up by commending the shape of her work-basket;—and, in short, without apparent effort, or any *outrée* flattery, contrived to please every body; and left us all, though reluctant to part from Blanch, in better humour with ourselves, and with each other, than when she entered.

Yet, my mother and I, in the course of the day, often looked round with feelings of regret amounting almost to dejection, and missed our bright-eye'd, heart-cheering young inmate even more than we had ourselves anticipated. Though she is not prone to utter fond professions, still, those whom she really loves, see it in her looks,—know it by her alacrity to oblige;—feel it in her sympathy with their pains or pleasures. Her laugh exhilarates — her seriousness soothes — her conversation interests all who approach her. She is, as my mother expresses it, "original without being *queer*;"—independent without being self-sufficient;—and her sacred love of truth is so inseparably blended with every other quality of her nature, that it at once inspires confidence, animates attention, and secures attachment. Ah, well may she so enthusiastically reverence the incomparable mother to whom she owes the early development of such invaluable rectitude! I have heard her say, that in her childhood she had, from possessing high spirits, and an active imagination, a strong propensity to indulge in romancing, to invent fantastical dreams, and to embellish every trivial in-

cident with the glaring colours of fiction. Her mother took alarm at these infantine flights of fancy, and never relaxed in her endeavours to root out a habit which she justly deemed so dangerous. Her labours, accompanied by no personal severity, but unremittingly directed to the great object of awakening the child to the *voice of conscience*, were blessed with such complete success, that Blanch adds: "I have my dear mother's own authority for saying, that, since I was eight years old, she never knew me deviate in a single instance from the strictest veracity; and whatever I told her, how improbable soever it might seem at first, she would, after looking earnestly in my face a moment, smilingly declare that she implicitly believed, because her little Bianca had said it!" Happy child to be in such wisely plastic hands! and happy mother, to have so ductile a subject to mould!

I obtained from her a promise before she went, that she would (if the hours which she was allowed to keep were not very unreasonable) address to me a few lines every night, specifying in general terms, the impression made upon her by the occurrences

of the day. I knew that had I asked her to write a positive letter once in twenty-four hours, I should have frightened her: but so modestly did I word my request, that she could not bring herself to refuse it; and I feel perfectly convinced, that her's is a spirit of too much activity to restrict itself literally and indolently to the 'tenour of her bond."

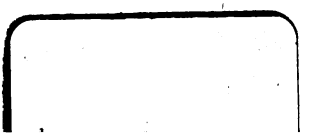
Philippa and I, after the departure of Miss Tracy and her companions, went to call upon lady Earlsford. My mother, not entirely satisfied with what she had observed of her ladyship's disposition towards us, during her last visit here, declined going with us: "When lurking dislike, decked in heartless smiles, seeks me under my own roof," cried she, "I have no redress—I must abide the unpleasant visitation: but I never did, nor ever will, sally forth on a voluntary pilgrimage in quest of such a penance. So give my compliments to the noble dame, and without troubling yourselves to assign any reason for having been appointed my deputies, ask her in my name (since Mr. Tremayne makes it his request) to allow Miss Tourberville to come back with you and spend the day."

We strictly obeyed these injunctions, lady Earlsford being at home, and immediately admitting us. Some symptoms of her early graciousness manifested themselves during the course of our visit; particularly towards Philippa, who, indeed, scrupled but little to avail herself of the knowledge which she has gained of her ladyship's prevailing foible, and administered flattery in as many ways as the time would permit. Little remained for me, except to sit still, and hear her echo, and applaud the Viscountess's sentiments on every subject that was started. They were of the same opinion respecting books, music, friendship, dress, visits, and society. Philippa belied her own better taste in more instances than one, during this enumeration: but that was immaterial, provided it could contribute to re-possess her of the good graces which she knew were upon the wane. The sacrifice so far succeeded, as to secure for her an invitation to dinner at Bovil Court the next day, to meet her friend Mrs. Talbot; and meanwhile, the honour of taking Miss Tourberville home with us being generously accorded to our prayers, we drove off triumphantly with our fair prize.

When we reached Hazleford, Martha, to do her justice, was of singular and essential service to us. Our young guest being burthened, as Dr. Johnson expresses it, with *no superfluity of understanding*, was well satisfied to depend chiefly upon her for entertainment throughout the day. Their minds, indeed, to use a military phrase which I learnt from Col. Ashford, seem to be nearly of the same calibre; and though Jane has the advantage in point of temper, Martha redeems that inferiority by being better skilled in knowledge of the prevailing fashions: so they prated of velvets and sattins, bonnets and pelisses, without intermission; were not at all afraid of each others abilities; grew rather confidential before the day was over; and, at their next meeting, will, I dare say, enter upon the grand topic of lovers and wedding-cake.

My mother was not much pleased at the engagement which Philippa had formed with lady Earlsford, and she would have been still less so, had she known with what baits the invitation had been angled for. But to be continually opposing the schemes and wishes of a daughter of five and twenty, is

a task for which she neither has inclination nor perseverance: "one grand exertion of authority in a year," she says, "is as much as I have resolution for. Had I begun upon the principle of ruling with absolute sway earlier in Philippa's life, the habit would now be established, and might be pursued without trouble on my part, or murmuring on hers: but we are both too old at the present day, to adopt or submit to new forms of government except by fits and starts. I have hardly yet recovered from the effort which I made to get her away from Mrs. Talbot's; and I really have not strength to engage again so soon in an attack upon a free-will which has had leisure to arrive at such maturity of growth. And after all, a mere dinner visit is widely different to a stationary abode amongst fools and coxcombs. And further, we may hope, that as a new sovereign began his reign in her fancy last night, he will supersede king Maurice, and, for the present, rule triumphantly and alone—king Elsmere, first of the name!"

END OF VOL. II.

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